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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

KING COBRA MYSTERY

BY

GEORGE GILBERT

William Hamilton Osborne's Story, "The Haunted Corridors," in Our Next Number

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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KING COBRA MYSTERY

A STORY OF DETECTIVE DEDUCTION

By GEORGE GILBERT

ONE

AT just 12 o'clock of a warm May night Jane Murray, the comfortable, pleasant matron of the thirteenth floor of the Hotel Allondayle, in the city's amusement and hostelry center, dozing easily at her desk in an alcove in the main corridor, was horrified to have break in upon the goodly dreams she was enjoying an unearthly yell. This nerve-freezing sound came from one of the rooms not far from her station. It was followed by silence. Just that one awful piercing cry that had told of a man in the depths of terror—then silence.

So hoarse, so unnatural, had been the accent of fear in the cry that the woman, accustomed as she was to out-of-the-way events that came often to vex her administration of her floor of that huge metropolitan caravansary, shuddered. It was too genuine a shriek to be set aside as coming from one suffering with nightmare. Clearly it foreboded black tragedy!

The matron arose hurriedly and stood, listening. A door opened down the hall and a faint voice inquired: "What is it?" It was one of the guests, anxious, alarmed. Another and another made the same inquiry, some from doors opened a crack, others from over transoms, as Miss Murray hastened down the hall. She listened, peered at doors that still remained closed or from the other side of which no queries were made of her.

Here and there heavy sleepers yet snored. Some rooms, by their darkened transoms, showed that their inmates were not awake or were out.

In her mind Jane Murray had fixed the cry as having come from a certain block of rooms about half-way down the main corridor. It had not come from any of the side passages, she was sure. By eliminating the rooms from which the guests were peering and by asking questions,

putting out of the equation those rooms she knew were vacant or to which the guests had not returned for the night, and those others from which the sounds of slumbering folks snoring came, Miss Murray fixed upon No. 1313 as the one from which the terrible cry—half appeal, half an exhalation of a soul's terror—had come. It could not be 1314, she reflected, as the room next door to 1313 was a supply room for the floor, in which were kept simply the towels, soaps, spare linen, mops, brooms and other things, under the charge of a servant who long ago should have gone to rest. The room on the other side was empty.

Miss Murray paused before No. 1313 and listened intently. As she did so the door of 1314 opened and a black man, in the garb of a hotel servant, came out and asked in high-pitched, trembling tones, his knees knocking together: "What is it, Miss Murray?"

"Oh, I don't know, Tonio; go for Carlin," giving him the name of the hotel's head detective.

"Yes'm; I was doing some late work sorting. Dat shout 'mos' kilt Tonio."

Knuckling his forehead in respectful salute, he went on his errand.

The hall, brilliantly lighted, now that a guest or two, in pajamas had found and turned on the flood lights, was silent as Jane Murray signed for the continuation of this absolute exterior quiet as she inquired of the awesome lack of sound within. She placed her ear to the door panel and waited.

As she did so a single groan came to her straining eardrums, then a shuffling sound, as if the man inside were crawling or hitching himself along over the floor. Then silence. Then, after it had endured a few seconds, came an odd, uncanny rustle, rustle, rustle, that went past the door where the matron was listening, came back, went by again.

Miss Murray rattled the door handle and called softly: "Mr. Weyburne!"

Again came the rustling and then, as she rattled the door handle again, an angry hiss!

Stepping back in fear, her blanched face showing to the guests that she had heard something of the most awful import, the matron glanced at the glass in the room's transom and noted that it was slightly reddened, as if from some faint light within. Knowing that the electric lights or gas in the room could not be turned as low as that, she was puzzled.

"Mr. Weyburne," she called, louder this time. She rattled the door handle again and again, and then, a panic sweeping over her, threw her weight against the panelled obstruction.

Some of the guests, men and women, some dressed, others in hurriedly donned night or lounging robes, came out and clustered with earlier comers about the door. A small babel of tongues arose, and from even the side corridors as well lights began to gleam.

"What is wrong here, Jane?" a solid, firm voice asked authoritatively. A big, round-faced, ruddy man came hurriedly up, fully dressed, evidently just in from a theater. He shouldered his way easily through the knot of people about the door of No. 1313.

"Oh, Mr. Dold," the matron made nervous answer, "something is wrong in Mr. Weyburne's room. I was just going to send for you for permission to use my master-key so I could force my way in. As a precaution I sent Tonio for Carlin." She jingled her keys suggestively as she spoke.

"Give me the keys," said Dold. As proprietor of the great hotel he was prepared to risk the possible displeasure of an old guest in the interests of safety. Aymster Weyburne, owner of a metropolitan and a string of small-town vaudeville houses, had a room in the hotel that he called his own and kept from year to year, although he did not occupy it except when detained overnight in the city or during the day, when in town on business, having a country place, his offices, and also spending much time on the road, about his circuit, and at times going abroad for long periods to look up novelties for his vaudeville theaters.

Dold shot back the bolt of the lock and swung open the door. Jane Murray and Dold stepped into the room together. As they did so the others crowded in after them until the room space in front of the door was fairly well filled with silent, apprehensive people.

The light from the corridor only partly illumined the room—the part just in front of the open door. The deeper recesses, back toward the outer wall and the farther corner, were dark, except that a ray of white light stabbed the darkness to the most distant angle of the baseboard. This light came from an electric torch in the clenched right hand of a man who lay, his legs drawn up until the knees pressed his abdomen, his head twisted to one side.

And that white beam from the tiny flasher held so steadily in the stiff hand, awful in its revealment of olive-gray mottled terror, focussed itself upon the upreared hood, the ruby eyes, the red-forked tongue, the sinuous length of—*a King Cobra!*

Frozen with awed fright, rooted to their tracks, the motley crowd gazed at the hamadryad as if held in the unanimity of coalescent fascination. Then all swayed, shivered, broke and ran, even the stolid Dold standing not upon the order of his going.

"It is one of the snakes that Mademoiselle Naga uses in her act at Weyburne's vaudeville house," said a voice somewhere back in the crowd that was huddled against walls and in door recesses. The number of persons in the corridor was increasing constantly.

"That's so; I was at the show there to-night," said Dold. "It is the same kind of serpent she uses in her act."

"Mademoiselle Naga was here late this evening," Jane Murray said weakly. "I saw her go down the hall to Weyburne's room. She came out soon, smiled at me pleasantly and went out. I paid no attention to her coming and going, as his performers often come to his rooms at odd hours."

"Did she have anything with her?" asked Dold.

"Only a medium-sized hand-bag," replied the matron.

"Well, we can't leave him in there, if there is a snake in the room. It is a case that must go to the police. The house detectives can't handle an affair like this that concerns the general public. Here, Miss Murray, take this master-key," handing her the one with which he had opened the door. "I'm glad you've sent for Carlin. Have a boy go tell the policeman on the beat, and I'll call police headquarters."

A frightened bell-hop went scurrying to the elevator to descend to the office to have the policeman on the beat notified. The big hotelkeeper went to a hall phone to give the alarm to police headquarters. Then, taking charge of the situation, Dold shepherded the guests out of the way with the plea that their presence "would obstruct the ends of justice."

Fifteen minutes later Dold stood with Jim Carlin, the house detective, waiting with Jane Murray, before No. 1313, when the elevator at the hall's end disgorged a pair of bluecoats and Captain Edward Trevelyn, Sixth Section of Detection. As Dold had told Trevelyn over the telephone the main facts in the case, as he knew them, no time was wasted outside the door in explanations. Trevelyn, with a gesture of decision, stepped to the door of the room, swung it wide open, entered and, instructed by Dold, felt for the electric light switch and flooded the room with light. The others crowded in after him.

On the floor, at the bedside, almost in front of the door, was the crumpled figure of a man. It was Amyster Weyburne, lying on its right side, the right arm crooked under the body to the elbow, the right forearm extended, the flashlight gripped in the stiffened fingers. The left arm, terribly swollen, was held down straight at the side, its blackened-purplish bulk filling out the wide arm of his night robe's sleeve. The man was dead!

From the dead man they glanced toward that farthest corner of the room again, to which the electric torch's ray pointed. The torch was almost out, its batteries exhausted from too long use. In that corner was upreared again the horrid bulk of the King Cobra, its head swaying,

swaying, swaying, its tongue gleaming like a quivering ray of sinister flame, its eyes blazing.

Carlin, accustomed to meet all sorts of situations, from tragedy to comedy, in his wide experience as a hotel detective, was first to face the emergency. He deliberately strode over to the heavy desk at the far corner of the room, picked up from near it a heavy metal wastebasket, up-ended the basket, grasped the bottom firmly and approached the snake, holding the basket before him. With a dexterous fling the steady-nerved Irishman flirted the basket over the snake, and before it could recover Carlin placed several heavy reference books and theatrical directories off Weyburne's desk on top of the basket, weighting it down beyond the possibility of the snake's powers to escape.

Every one drew breaths of deepest relief at this successful maneuver of the lithe, black-haired, dark-eyed house detective.

"Good work," said Trevelyn. "Now, let's examine the body," and with an effort the headquarters expert bent his thick, pudgy form over the dead man.

The cause of the death of the impresario was plainly revealed when Captain Trevelyn picked up the heavy, gorged left arm of the corpse and pointed a thick index finger significantly to the wrist. There, just over the artery that makes the pulse, was the focus from which the swelling radiated, and in its center was to be seen the puncture into which had been injected the poison that had caused the death of the unfortunate theatrical magnate.

"Ugh!" faltered Trevelyn, dropping the distorted arm with a gesture of deepest disgust; "the cobra did its work quickly. Its bits is almost instant death if placed in an artery. Maybe his heart was weak, and that may have helped the poison to do its work the quicker."

"Not a bad guess, sir," said Carlin. He had been at the desk since trapping the hamadryad. "Here's a vial of strychnine pills, a heart stimulant, and a bottle of some sort, each made out according to a prescription number in one of the drug-stores in a place that I know is on Weyburne's circuit. He held up the vial and rattled the white pellets as he spoke, the pills fairly bounding inside the glass under the impulses given by his virile muscles.

"Better shut them up, with all the other things there, in the desk," suggested Trevelyn. "There's no telling what this will lead to, and we may need every scrap of paper to give us a clue." And he set the cap on his head back some more from the bald spot that was beginning to eat its way above his forehead's proper area.

"Dold," asked Trevelyn, "how did that thing," indicating the place where the cobra still struggled and hissed with rage under the wastebasket, "get into this room?"

"Search me; I don't keep such things for pets or to hunt rats with in this hotel," replied Dold, rather testily. "It's getting so our women guests bring almost everything from a horned toad to a polar bear in as pets, but that is the first King Cobra I have ever seen here."

"But haven't you any theory to account for its being here?"

"One of his actresses has an act with snakes in it. I saw the act to-night. She uses just that kind of snake. I had a good pair of glasses on her during her act. She was up here with him to-night, just after the show closed in his vaudeville house."

"Who is she?"

"Billed as Mademoiselle Naga."

"Where does she stay?"

"That I don't know. But you can get that information from Weyburne's office or the booking offices. The addresses of all the show folks are there, you know."

"Grayson," said Trevelyn, "note in your memo book an order to have all the booking places covered for information about this snake woman."

Grayson made the desired notation.

Carlin, who had left the desk, after locking it, already was examining the room in detail. He went to the windows while Trevelyn watched and found both windows locked on the inside. There was only one door to the room —that by which they had entered. Between the bed and the window was a steam radiator, now cold, owing to the warm spell of weather that had ushered May to a night near to its close. A few simple chairs, the desk, the bed and the wardrobe, all of fine cabinet work, completed the elegant furniture of the room. The wardrobe had only a few clothes in it—enough for a change or two—and it sat against a solid wall. It was unlocked, and search of it showed nothing definite. The windows did not give out upon the fire-escape, as the rooms in that section were taken care of by a fire-escape near the end of the hall, and so were plainly marked by red signs in the corridor with a hand pointing to the fire exit.

"That snake was put down by some one who came through the door," Carlin said, after he had completed his bold examination.

"That's too plain for argument, man," said Trevelyn; "but was the snake put down on purpose to kill Weyburne, or did it escape from somewhere and wander in here? Might not have Weyburne undertaken to care for it, as a favor, for Mademoiselle Naga?"

"Why not look in the desk; something in his papers may give a vague clue," suggested Dold.

"That's a mighty good idea," and Trevelyn stepped to the desk, took the key that Carlin gave him and swung down the desk lid. A loud hiss from the cobra caused him to start back. He had not been that close to the dread serpent before.

"He's trapped and can't get loose, Trev," said Carlin maliciously. The house detective was preening himself inwardly that he had been able to make the deadly hamadryad a captive so easily—and in the presence of Jane Murray, too.

The regular detectives had overturned several of his cases, and he did not like to miss an opportunity to hackle them.

"Never you mind me," said Trevelyn tartly, but also with more than a trace of nervousness in his manner still. He searched the cubbyholes of the desk for a moment and then uttered a sharp exclamation of satisfaction:

"Here it is," holding up a folded piece of paper.

The other, disregarding the hisses of the trapped serpent, stepped to Trevelyn's side. He presented for their inspection a printed form—a contract such as stage folk and their managers enter into to bind a bargain for services and remuneration therefore.

"There," said Trevelyn, indicating an amendment to the regular printed form, inserted with a caret, the inserted writing being trim and even—evidently that of a woman. "This contract is one between Weyburne and Mademoiselle Naga, and she has offered a suggestion for the betterment of it from her standpoint. This amendment is '$500 a week,' whereas in the typed original it was '$400 a week.' My theory is that Mademoiselle Naga came here to ask for that change, was refused, that Weyburne stuck the contract back into the desk and, as she went out, she slipped that snake out of her hand-bag, that Miss Murray says she had with her, with the idea that the cobra would bite Weyburne and so give her revenge. My recollection is that the press notices of her touted her as a half-French, half-native woman of Malacca. Probably she's half Malay, and the Malaysian races are noted for their treachery."

"I don't believe any such thing," said Jane Murray. "Mademoiselle Naga did not impress me as a woman who would do a nasty thing like that," waving her hand toward Weyburne's body. "She was smiling and humming a little happy tune when she came over to take the elevator after seeing Weyburne."

"Just what she would do to throw us off the trail," said Trevelyn. "She knew that Weyburne would be found dead, that her snake would be found in the room, and so she went out with a smile on her lips, a tune on her tongue, so she could have it said afterwards of her and with entire truth, that on her exit from Weyburne's room she displayed no signs of agitation."

"Here is something curious," said John Bolton, Trevelyn's second assistant. He held up a bit of paper he had picked up from the floor under the desk. Trevelyn

spread it out on the desk swing shelf and saw that it was a bit of rice paper, on which was the warning word, "Beware," under which was sketched a single human eye.

"That's a queer one," Carlin said.

"Mademoiselle Naga has the mark of an eye, in grease-paint, on her forehead, during her act," remarked Dold.

"And cobras are known in India as 'spectacle serpents' from the queer marks on the backs of their hoods," said Trevelyn proudly. "I remember that much from my geography lessons when I was a kid."

"Sure it wasn't natural history lessons?" girded Carlin, who was bending down, his eyes level with the down-swung shelf of the desk. "But look here at all the finger prints that show in the slight, oily film of dust on that desk. When you are in this light you catch them; but looking from above, you don't."

Trevelyn, nettled to have the house detective best him again, stooped and had to admit that there were finger prints visible there.

"Probably Weyburne's," he insisted.

"No," replied Carlin tenaciously. "On this side," indicating that nearest where the cobra was trapped under the basket, "the prints are smaller; those of a woman."

"They probably sat there," Trevelyn said grudgingly. "She at this side of the desk, he at the other, and argued. They tapped their finger-tips nervously on the wood, as people will when before a desk. She made her request, presenting the contract. He refused her request. She being close up to the desk, as we can see because her finger prints are nearer the center of it than are his, so had the bag in her lap, under the desk lid. She slipped the snake out of her bag and let it wriggle softly to the thick rug. Its fall made no noise. She went out. Weyburne went to bed, and laid there with one arm extending over onto the floor. The cobra, running across the hanging arm in his tour of the room to find a place of escape, stung the man – the wrist. That's how I piece the action together."

"Very plausible," said Dold, with a shudder.

"Do we take these finger prints, cap?" asked Bolton.

"Yes, you and Grayson do it and stay here until the coroner's physician comes. After that the body may be removed to an undertaker's."

"But what about the snake?"

A gasping sound from behind them brought all about, astounded. In the doorway, her arms outstretched, was a woman. Her eyes, fixed on the contorted form of the dead man, fairly blazed with mingled rage and horror. Her slim, strong form, the perfect slope of her shoulders, revealed by the filmy lace of her gown, the dainty pink bonnet that was a real ornament to her shapely head, the features, pretty, but not too regular, piquant in their charm, all denoted the unusual female personage.

"Amyster," she breathed, going to the side of the dead man. Bending over, she gazed at him, apparently disregarding the presence of the other people in the room. She lifted up the discolored, distended arm, glanced at the wrist, with its dread puncture. Then she dropped it and, standing erect, suppressed a storm of sobs that seemed about to overpower her.

"It's Mademoiselle Naga," whispered Dold to Trevelyn.

"Mighty good acting," Trevelyn said, glancing shrewdly aside at the hotel man. Then Trevelyn stepped forward and asked:

"Mademoiselle Naga, what brings you here?"

"Some one telephoned from your hotel that Mr. Weyburne had been bitten by a snake—killed by a cobra," she said.

"Where were you when called?"

"At my hotel, the Glendon, monsieur." Her English was good.

"Why should some one telephone *you?*"

"I suppose knowing I was playing at his house, monsieur."

"Who was it?"

"The voice was not to me familiar; low and soft, almost like a woman's."

"A likely tale—for the marines," Trevelyn sniffed.

"Sir?"

The show girl turned on Trevelyn like a flash, and he stepped back a pace before the menace of her blazing eyes. The half-circle of people about her and the dead man involuntarily widened as she did so.

Trevelyn returned to the charge, producing, with a flourish, the bit of rice paper on which the word "Beware" was written.

"How do you account for this, and for the fact that this eye, drawn on it, is like the form of the eye you have on your forehead during your act?" he demanded.

"Monsieur appears to accuse me," he had for his answer. She was cool now, facing Trevelyn steadily. "As for this paper, I know nothing of it. As for the eye on my forehead in my act, that is part of the make-up of all snake charmers of my country. Sometimes the eye is on the forehead, at times embroidered on the dress or engraved on bangles. It is the mark of Siva, the goddess of the snake clans."

"But how comes it that Weyburne was bitten by one of your snakes after you had had an altercation with him over your contract?" demanded Trevelyn, with an accent of triumph in his voice.

"No altercation had we, monsieur. On good terms we met, at his suggestion, he being so pleased with the patronage of my act that he offered me more money. I brought the old contract, amended in my writing to suit my ideas and he accepted it and gave me a new one, amended like the old one, in his handwriting," she said. Her strong, slender fingers worked and worked at her side, and the diamond rings on them sparkled. Her supple, slender form swayed.

"I suppose you have this new amended contract?"

"In my room at my hotel, monsieur." She pointed to the desk and continued: "We discussed the matter at that escritoire. I sat at this side of it, Mr. Weyburne at that."

"The same as I reasoned it out, eh?" said Trevelyn, turning to Dold and grinning with self-satisfaction. He studied her pretty, determined face a moment, then said:

"But how does it happen that after you are gone he is killed by one of your snakes?"

"What proof is there that this snake is mine?" She plainly was defiant now.

"What more proof do we need? Under that wastebasket there," indicating it, "is the snake. Mr. Dold has seen your show and says it is one of your pets. Didn't you bring it here in your hand-bag and, after Weyburne had repulsed you, drop it, to kill him with its bite?" He shook an accusing fat finger under her delicately chiseled nose, but she did not wince in the least.

"Let me see this serpent, monsieur," and she swept past them and, before any one could stop her, she knocked the wastebasket over. With an angry hiss the cobra struck, but she was back in a flash, hand and arm drawn out of harm's way. Ere the snake could recover from its stroke, and while it was still extended from the thrust, the young woman's right hand flashed forward and she grasped the snake just where its hood came to its neck, and it at once lashed itself about her shapely forearm. Holding the awful menace tightly, she came forward toward the frightened group of people, all on the point of bolting through the open door.

"Go not so!" she commanded, rather than requested. "I can keep him."

Trevelyn was the first to recover from his fright. He stepped back into the center of the room again.

"But is it your snake?" he demanded.

"It is of the size of mine. Snakes have few distinguishing marks on them to set off one of a species from another, especially so the cobras. As these snakes are not found on every bush in this great city," this last with intense sarcasm, "I presume this snake is one of mine," she said, "lacking sure proof."

"Aha," said the inquisitor, "then you admit all?"

"I admit nothing. I keep the fangs of my cobras pulled out as fast as they are renewed by nature, as a matter of precaution. So they are able to deliver a fatal bite

only if they can grasp a victim and hold on, the venom then flowing from the poison sac into the wound through the punctures made by their chewing teeth. The poison sacs are in their jaws, as to take them out would injure the snake. But by pulling the fangs out as fast as they grow in new, the danger is less. I hope what I say is confidential, as to have it known broadcast would injure my act. But I run much risk as it is."

"If your cobra has its fangs out, that can be proved," said Carlin, again brave at seeing the plucky woman handling the serpent so fearlessly. Also he wanted Jane Murray to see that he was not at a loss for a word in season.

"It is easy to prove," she answered. "See!"

With her left hand Mademoiselle Naga reached over with the confidence of long practice and grasped the serpent's upper lips between her left thumb and forefinger, the strong grip on the snake's neck meanwhile all but paralyzing its motions back of its neck. She deftly fixed the lips back to expose the fangs. As she did so she gave an exclamation of horror. Plainly revealed in the snake's upper jaw were the white, needle-like fangs—perfect natural hyperdermic needles. The snake contracted its neck muscles strongly and a fine stream of the awful venom shot from the fang tips, spraying in a thread-like line onto the white sheet of the rumpled bed, seven or eight feet away, the poison making on the sheet a slightly greenish stain.

"You see," said Trevelyn, "how 'perfectly harmless' your pet is?"

Mademoiselle Naga made no reply to him. Instead she turned to Dold and said:

"Get me something into which I can drop this cobra."

"Quick," ordered Jane Murray.

"Dold hurried out and in a moment came back, a grip in his hand. "I got it from my rooms across the hall," he said.

"Open it," the snake woman ordered. Her voice was steady, her grip on the snake firm.

"Dold flipped open the grip and held it gingerly out.

"No flinching, monsieur," the snake woman said. Deliberately she unwound the serpent's folds from her forearm and holding it by the tail and head over the grip, dropped it. As it fell into the grip, Dold snapped the grip shut. A loud sigh of relief came from all the others.

"I don't know how that cobra came to have perfect fangs," said Mademoiselle Naga weakly.

"You can explain that—elsewhere," snapped Trevelyn. "You take your snake back to its mates. I suppose you keep them all in your rooms, taking them to the theater each day and night?"

"Yes; it is dangerous to them and to others to leave them in a theater, even if boxed. They are too valuable to me. I have special carrying cases, which a porter carries back and forth, and my own snake chests in which they stay at my hotel."

"How many do you use in your act?"

"Six, monsieur. I can do with less, but I started from Malacca with six, so that if one died, I could have enough. I could do with three."

"But couldn't you have others sent you or have one from some museum or wild animal dealer?"

"*Mais*, monsieur!" She became animated now. "Wild cobras to me are useless. All mine are trained, trained, do you hear?"

"Well, you go back to your hotel. We can find you if it becomes necessary—and I think it will be necessary."

She tossed her head disdainfully and started for the door, grip in hand. But she drew back as she started to pass the dead body. Then she bent over with a single swift gesture and patted the cold cheeks of Weyburne. Then she straightened up—and was gone.

"I'd hate to have the half-French woman and her snakes mad at me," said Trevelyn.

"Judging from her actions she was not overly mad at Weyburne," suggested Carlin.

"No, indeed," said Jane Murray. "She acted more like one who felt his loss keenly."

"You never can tell," said Trevelyn. "You know she gets lots of money for being a good actress." Then, turning to his assistant, he said:

"Boys, take the screws out of the hinge of that desk shelf with the finger prints on it, being careful to handle it from the outer and inner edges, and so leaving the prints on the two sides undisturbed. At headquarters you can plumbago them and get the photographs. Take that amended contract and anything else you find in the desk or his pockets."

The men went to work. Dold went out to get a cigar. Carlin stood about, watching the two policemen at work. Miss Murray went to her post. Trevelyn went over the body again to make sure there was no other wound. Finding none, he was just straightening up, when the hall phone buzzed. He heard Dold, on his way back, answer it. In a moment the hotel man came in and announced:

"That snake girl calls me up from her room in the Glendon, which is near by, to tell me to tell you that she found on her arrival that whereas she had six snakes, after she had dropped in her chests the one she picked up here, she now has seven."

Trevelyn gazed at Dold in wild amazement. This was not modified when Dold asked: "What do you make of it?"

The police leader replied caustiely: "But how do we know if she had six, seven or a dozen cobras? No one in the city has seen any of her snakes, except those she shows on the stage. No one but her has been bold enough to investigate closely the snake population of her baggage, I'll be bound. I am sure I would not care for the job of snake enumerator to her pets. She was the only person here just before your floor matron heard Weyburne scream. She had a hand-bag. The snake might have been in it—was in it, in fact. She dropped the snake, went out and that is the real story of this crime."

"Do you intend to make a formal charge against her?"

"Not now. She may be able, before a susceptible jury, to beat us yet, so it is best to let her go, and while she is at liberty she may do something to make the case against her absolutely sure. We can always get her, she being so well known."

The desk shelf being unhinged and ready for carrying away, the two men with Trevelyn went with it. On their way down the hall they ran into the incoming advance guard of the reporters for the morning newspapers.

"Who sent you up here?" demanded Dold.

"No one has to send us where there's news to be had," flippantly responded Ned Bengue of the *Times*.

"But who tipped you fellows off?" asked Trevelyn. "I was just going to call you to meet me at my office. Come back here."

"Some one who said he was from this hotel called up all the offices and spread the tidings that there was a corking story here and that Mademoiselle Naga was guilty," said Bengue.

"You boys sit down." They were in the death room now. "Sit on the bed or chairs, and I'll sketch the facts as we know them," said Trevelyn. "There is no reason for secrecy. We have the guilty one under observation, and I want that brought out in the story. It is one of those cases where it is all over with the first day's print of it."

The reporters, to whom Weyburne was well known, gazed solemnly at the body. The dead man had given so many newsmen passes, had been so affable in making copy for them, that they long had looked at him as one of their own kind. To see his body there, convulsed in the death posture of one who had died in the most acute and horrifying agony, gave them all a chill of fear—a sensation that most of them were strangers to.

Briefly but accurately the detective leader sketched for the reporters the facts in the case—from his viewpoint. Dold, interested chiefly in getting the matter wiped off the hotel's slate, corroborated the detective's statements. In fact he had no reason to do aught else, as Trevelyn did not deviate from the merits of the case, as he saw them, during his whole statement. He answered the rapid fire of questions from the newsmen quickly and unerringly.

The photographers in the party set off their flashlight bombs for pictures of the scene of the crime.

Within half an hour the reporters were streaking it for the elevators and for telephones, to get the sensational tale to their respective offices in time for the city editions, the earlier ones having gone to press. Each of the newsmen got orders from his chief to get all possible facts for later and fuller stories and each reported to the other, as they met later in a nearby all-night resort for refreshments that the editors hailed it as one of the most readable and most sensational news stories of the decade.

The coroner's physician, arriving at the Hotel Allondayle, soon after the detectives had gone, gave permision for the corpse to be removed. To the newsmen he expressed opinion, unofficial, of course, that the dead man had come to his end from a bite from a King Cobra. He had no opinion as to how or why the cobra should be in Room 1313, thirteenth floor of the Hotel Allondayle, in the center of a great American city, instead of in the jungles of the Far East.

"That," he said, "is for the detective force to ascertain. Nor were the editors of the morning dailies in error when they told their reporters that the story would be one of the best ever printed in modern Babylon. The first pages, with their streamers, big type in the subheads, the leads set in black, from ten to thirty point, the illustrations—Mademoiselle Naga in stage attire, wreathed in serpents, Weyburne in his office and motor car and as head of the Actors' Fund—the strange manner of the accomplishment of the crime, all contributed to make the story one of absorbing horror, such as the city's nerves crave for in increasing doses.

Several of the articles noted that Weyburne had paid much attention to Mademoiselle Naga.

It was Bengue of the *Times* who gave the story its real title, when he labelled the case

"THE KING COBRA MYSTERY."

Much was made of the fact that the rice paper that contained the warning "Beware" had under it the drawing of an eye and that Mademoiselle Naga, in stage costume, had such a mark on her forehead, in grease-paint.

But it was as the "King Cobra Mystery" that the case was discussed everywhere, high and low and by rich and poor.

About 7 o'clock that morning, as the office of the Allondayle was being shifted from the control of the night force to that coming on for the day and as several new guests, in on early trains from the suburbs for the day, on pleasure or business, were being booked, Jere Thompson, the chief night clerk, after patting his red checked tie into place with his well-manicured hand and feeling of the diamond pin in the tie's puff, languidly turned his brown eyes down from his six foot nothing to see, almost on the level of the desk, a head that was that of a man, although it was on a body so short that it might have been taken for that of a boy, but that it was so sturdy. The stranger, who was puffing a cigarette, turned his head aside a bit and blew a perfect ring of smoke through one corner of his mouth and sent another smoke ring through the first with another quick puff.

"Aha, success," said this queer person. His voice was full and resonant—a baritone—in strange contrast to his shortness.

"What can we do for you?" asked the polite clerk.

"Give me a room—on the thirteenth floor," said the short man. From the other corner of his mouth he repeated his ring-blowing feat.

The thirteenth floor being much on Thompson's mind, on account of the murder in 1313, he started at this direct request for a room there. The other early incoming guests had been cared for.

"There is nothing on that floor," he said, "but I can give you a good room on almost any of the other floors."

Disappointment showed plainly on the stranger's face. Hastily blowing a double smoke-ring in his agitation, with an effort he swung a small grip up onto the desk and explained:

"When I was in the Allondayle last three years ago I had 1313, and I have had in an application for it now for some weeks, having written from Rio de Janeiro for it. It suited me so well that I made up my mind I wanted it when business called me to New York again. I came here early this morning from my home in Jersey——"

"Then you haven't heard what happened in 1313 last night?" asked Thompson. He did not believe it would be policy to put a guest in the death chamber without telling him what had happened. He had instructions not to let the room out until the police had given the word that they were through making inquiries there.

"Oh, yes," here the stocky man blew a double smoke-ring from the opposite corner of his mouth, "but what difference does that make? I read all about it on my way in on the train this morning, sir."

Thompson gazed with interest at this small man who seemed to take terrible death so much as a matter of course. As he did so the would-be guest stepped back from the desk a bit, being then plainly visible from where the clerk stood. Thompson saw a chunky person, dressed in severe black broadcloth, with a wide-rimmed high hat, black string-tie, black shoes of patent leather, as delicate in their outlines as those of a young girl. He had a thick, muscular body and, for all his extreme stockiness, he was quick and active in his movements and his clothing fitted him to perfection. His head was large, and he had regular features like those on antique cameos. His neck was so short that it was almost discounted in an appraisal of his anatomy. The mustache of warm brown tone, agreeing with the rippling hair of his head, his deep, brown eyes, expressive mouth and well-set chin impressed one in his favor. His hands, strong and nervous, were busy, one with his cane head, the other with his cigarette. A slight swing of the man's body, half revealing the outlines of his back, solved the mystery of his odd shape. He was a hunchback, although without a pronounced hump, the deformity having resulted in shortening, thickening a body that without it had been designed for that of an active and rather stout man of above the medium height. Apparently he was about forty years of age.

"How long would you want 1313 for?" asked Thompson.

"I might want it for a long time; perhaps for a short period. It all depends upon my business here."

Thompson considered. Rooms where crimes had been committed were not popular—or easy to let, as he knew. Floor thirteen had been an unlucky one, the natural prejudice of people against the "unlucky number" being against it. With obstinacy, the owner of the hotel pointed to famous men who had great careers and whose names had thirteen letters each in them and used that as an argument against skipping the "thirteens" in floors and rooms in the Allondayle, and as the hotel had been started with the "thirteen fad" defied, it had been kept so. Room 1313 had not been a money-maker and seldom was taken unless the hotel was crowded or unless some one like Weyburne came along with a notion that thirteen is not unlucky. So when he took it it had been fitted up with fine furniture and everything possible done to make it comfortable for him, that he might keep it.

"I can do this," said Thompson, after consulting the card index file and finding that the room *had* been spoken for in a letter from Rio, as the short man had claimed; "that room will be cleaned out to-day, if the police give us permission. You might leave your grip in the office check-room and stay with us until Mr. Dold, the proprietor, is up and around and then he can decide."

The hunchback hesitated a moment, then shoved his grip in as a sign that he had consented, and at once blew several rings out of the right corner of his mouth with an appearance of great enjoyment.

Then the short man signed the register:

"MCMURDOO MCMURDOO, BATHURST, N. J."

"I'm anxious to get settled," he said, "because I am here this time to consult with the city authorities as to plans

for laying out the new reptile house at the zoo, and I must also attend to other important matters relating to my profession, which is that of toxicologist and herptologist. I am to read several very important papers before the Institute of Science on several phases of toxicology."

"Toxicologist?"

"Yes; one who studies poisons of all sorts."

"Oh, yes."

Thompson estimated the chunky man again. He had hit npon McMurdoo's name in the Sunday magazine sections of the newspapers in connection with various articles on abstruse scientific subjects, written in popular style. He recalled his features, now that he had the famous man before him in person. The cuts in the news sheets had given him the impression that McMurdoo was a giant, but that was because they had shown his head and shoulders only—the massive head and shoulders that were fit to top the torso of a giant.

"There can be no harm in taking in this noted man," Thompson thought quickly. "He knows about the tragedy and his stay in it will bridge over the first period of public aversion to the room that has been the scene of a crime of violence. Next month there will be a new sensation to make folks forget this one. This McMurdoo's persistence in wanting that room looks like a piece of good luck for the Allondayle."

"I'd like to go up and look the room over before I fully decide," said the man with the big head and shoulders; "some changes may have been made in the furnishings or decorations that may not suit me. I am sensitive about such small matters. If it doesn't suit, I may take another room."

"I believe everything in the room will suit," said Thompson, apprehensive now that some new whim might shift the prospective guest out of the hotel altogether.

McMurdoo hesitated, blew several smoke-rings at the ceiling, tipping back his head for that purpose until it seemed that his high hat would fall off the back of his head. But it did not.

"Suppose you go and look it over, just as it is," decided Thompson. "The room is untidy now, and the body of the man is not out of it, but if you insist——"

"By all means. Such matters do not bother me, sir."

"I'll phone up to the floor matron to show you the room," said the clerk.

McMurdoo nodded and a bell-hop took him in tow for the elevator, which whisked him upward.

In the main corridor of 13, McMurdoo found Jane Murray at the end of her period of duty from midnight to 8 a. m., sitting in the alcove, a copy of an early edition spread out before her under the light of the well-shaded tungsten. She arose as McMurdoo approached and greeted him briskly.

"The office informs me you wish to look over 1313," she said. McMurdoo nodded and stood, expectant, hat off, cane in hand.

Miss Murray jingled her keys and came out from behind her desk, patting her white cap into place with her shapely hand for the thousandth time since going on duty for the night. She started down the corridor alertly, McMurdoo at her side, his short legs making two strides to every one made by the strong, self-reliant matron.

As they neared 1313 a negro porter passed, carrying a great pyramid of towels stacked up on his arms like cordwood. The pile was so high that he had to hold his head to one side to see around the towels and ahead of him. As he passed 1313, the eyes of the servitor rolled in terror, it seemed, and he kept to the wall opposite the room of the dead man. In the center of the negro's forehead was a peculiar scar or mark.

"Those blackies are pretty well scared of that room?" said McMurdoo, noticing the negro's agitation. Just then the black reached the door of 1314 and, leaning his pyramid of towels against the door-jamb, after the manner of his kind, maneuvered so that one hand was free to use to open the supply room door. He passed inside, rolling his eyes in a wild manner.

"Yes; Tonio was sorting his linen when the dying man screamed," said Miss Murray, "and I sent him for the hotel detective. In fact, he had been in Mr. Weyburne's room often, going in nights to fix his pillows for him, as Mr. Weyburne had to be propped in bed, owing to heart trouble. Weyburne would call him in by hitting on the wall or steam pipes if he heard him, and Tonio would go in and fix the pillows to Weyburne's back. He'll miss the tips he earned, I guess. No wonder he's scared over this frightful tragedy."

"Yes, indeed," McMurdoo agreed. They were in front of 1313 now. The guest's cane tapped with nervous energy on the floor.

"The body is inside yet," Miss Murray warned. "The coroner's physician gave permission for its removal hours ago, but the undertaker's people were just here and will be up soon to take it away. It is to be kept by them so the police can have it if needed; burial is to be some days hence."

"I am not afraid of a dead body," said the short man. "Let's go right inside, so I can look over the room and then go get some breakfast. Dead bodies are no new thing for me."

The matron swung the door of 1313 wide and they entered. The body of Weyburne was about as it had been at first, the coroner's physician having made only a formal examination of it there, enough to "view the remains,"

The snake woman held the serpent by the tail over the grip and dropped it in.

in accordance with the requirements of the archaic law. The curtains were drawn.

The phone at Miss Murray's desk tinkled, the sound of the call coming to them through the open door.

"That's my call," said she, her ears atune to the silver metallic overtones that sounded "duty" in her ears. She went out, leaving the door open.

No sooner had she gone than the hunchback deftly swung one of his small, delicate feet behind him, so that it hit the door. The door swung to, partly shutting out the view of any one who might be passing in the hall. Laying down his cane on the floor, McMurdoo in a flash had stepped to the bed and glanced hurriedly about it, noting the rumpled impress of the body of the dead man on the mattress, so plainly shown that it proved that Weyburne must have lain in one position most of his hours abed. A rather soiled extra pillow laying on the left side of the bed claimed his attention for a moment; then he studied closely the way the sheets were wrinkled and twisted after the final struggle of the dead man to throw himself out of the bed in the awful agony caused by the horrible poison in his veins. The steam radiator also came in for a brief examination and at its end he swept a magnifying glass from his pocket with a rapid gesture and looked through it at something on the floor near the base of the radiator. Then he took a cigarette paper from a case and dabbed at the carpet at the radiator's base with thumb and forefinger, as one who thus picks up fine dust. This he deposited in the cigarette paper, which he twisted up and thrust into his vest pocket. Straightening up, the hunchback came around the bed and first looked a moment at the open wardrobe, then went to the body. He bent over it, and examined particularly the bloated wrist, noting the puncture hole carefully. The set muscles of the corpse, rigid now, prevented him from flexing the forearm, as Trevelyn had done the night before. McMurdoo, in furtherance of his strange and sudden inquiry, had to crouch down, like a squat gnome, over the dead body. Once he even smelled, gingerly, of the puncture hole and drew back with disgust written on his expressive features. Then, grasping the cold wrist in both hands, he used his thumbs on it as a masseur might, pressing hard on either side of the puncture hole. He gave an exclamation as something appeared in the deadly aperture. This he picked out with nimble thumb and forefinger and, letting the stiff arm go, put what he had found in another cigarette paper, depositing it, too, in his vest pocket. Then he drew himself erect—just in time. Jane Murray entered, to find the strange man standing quietly, cane in one hand, hat in the other, just as she had left him.

"Sorry I had to leave you alone," she apologized, "but there was a call for me to attend to down the hall and two or three messages to take care of."

"Don't apologize; business is business," said the hunchback. "I'm satisfied with the room, and when that," indicating the corpse, "is removed, I'll have no repugnance against occupying it, even to-night."

Jane Murray glanced rather oddly at the stocky scientist, but made no comment. Experience in a great hotel had made her expect the unusual in men, women—and events. It was the usual that had the power to startle her.

"I'll have to hurry back to the desk," she said, edging McMurdoo out of the room and along the hall. "There is a party coming up to take another room along here. That is one of the calls that kept me at the phone."

As they came opposite the elevator shaft the car stopped and discharged a dark, slight, round-faced man, who turned to the matron's desk as if he had been instructed to go there. Jane Murray spoke to him:

"Are you looking for the floor matron here?"

"Yes, mees," he replied, his accent being decidedly gentle, his voice queerly at variance with quick, sharp, decisive American speech. "I weesh thee vacant rooms on this floor to see. I am eenstructed from the office thus to act, mees."

"But you called me yourself about it; it was not the office," Jane said rather sharply.

"Very well, mees," he said suavely; "I did the desk phone use at the ofeece below, but in the preesence of the so poleete a clerk, ah, yees."

He bowed, his salutation including McMurdoo. He pulled a card from a case and offered it to Miss Murray, who read on it:

"SAMTRA HURRIBRUDDHA, Malacca and New York,
"General Oriental Merchandise."

Again he bowed low, with a sweeping gesture of abnegation. McMurdoo, at one side, was out of the conversation.

"There is only one vacant room in this part of this floor," said the matron, "and that is the one where the murder occurred last night. I suppose you know about that?"

The Oriental's eyes sparkled with animation. His hands were flung out in a wide gesture of disapproval.

"Oh, yees," he said, "I of that horreeble crime read. I the papiers do read, being in Eenglish well educated. I would that room take, if necessary, to get on thees floor, as this Allondayle is better situated for my sample room than where I now am, mees."

"But the room is already let to this gentleman," indicating McMurdoo.

"Hello, Miss Murray; which one of these gentlemen is Mr. McMurdoo?" called a cheery voice. It was Dold, well tubbed, brisk, clad in irreproachable gray for the morning round of duties and urbane greeting for distinguished guests.

"This is Mr. McMurdoo," she answered, pointing out the scientist.

Dold came forward and offered his warm hand, which McMurdoo grasped heartily.

"Glad you've come back," mine host said. "I was away when you were here before, touring Europe, so I did not see you then. But we remember you as a pleasant guest. I had a call from the desk to hunt you up, and I put on extra speed in dressing to catch you."

In fact Thompson had urged Dold to look the odd guest over in order to be on the safe side before letting 1313 out to him.

The Oriental, thus thrust out of the conversation, stood irresolute at first.

As Dold, Miss Murray and McMurdoo chatted there a moment, it was Miss Murray who discovered that the little dark man had disappeared. She turned about and asked:

"Where did that other man go?"

"He was here a moment ago," said Dold. "Didn't he go down the stairs to the next floor? Who was he?"

Briefly she explained.

"Queer that he should want a room up here," said Dold, "and no other place. This floor seems to be getting pretty popular," smiling at McMurdoo, who began to explain why he wanted 1313. He was in the full tide of this when a commotion broke out down the hall and they wheeled to see Carlin emerge from the death room, propelling the sputtering foreigner before him toward the elevator.

"I protest thee indigneetee," the small dark man was wailing; "eet is too much that I am so humileeated. My sole interest is in securing a room suitable to faceeleetate my traffic."

"You'll drop down the elevator shaft or go in the cage," snorted Carlin, pressing him forward.

"Easy there, Carlin; what is it?" queried Dold. McMurdoo, his intelligent eyes sparkling, was keenly observant.

"I was coming along, having heard you were here, from my room down the side hall," said the house detective, giving an extra twist to the foreigner's collar, now almost too tight for the captive to draw breath, "when I noticed that the door of 1313 was open——"

"I did leave it open, I think," said Jane Murray.

"Was open," went on Carlin, "and I looked in, and there was this man, peering about. I pounced on him—and here he is."

Behind the struggling man's back Carlin winked at Dold, who caught some signals Carlin made with his free hand and nodded.

"I but glanced to see eef the room was according to my parteecular reequirements," the dark man said, by way of explanation.

"He's been trying to hire a room up here, sent up by the clerk at the office," said Dold. "I guess nothing but a fresh and ignorant foreigner. Let him go."

"He phoned from the office, but the office did not send him to me," said Miss Murray.

Carlin, who had almost released his hold upon the man, tightened his grip again at this contradiction.

"Excuse me," broke in McMurdoo, "but where does this man live?"

"My hotel is the Branscome," mentioning another big hotel a block distant, toward the waterfront. "But there I am not weeth satisfaction filled. And on you I call for weetness that in theese hotel used I am weeth indigneetee. Will you let me have 1313?"

McMurdoo negatived the proposal emphatically.

"You get right into the elevator and go while the going is good," said Carlin.

An elevator flashed into sight, stopped at the signal. Carlin loaded the man into the car and gave the elevator man the signal to go—quickly. The cage took the still jabbering objector out of sight and hearing. Stepping to a hall phone Carlin talked a moment and then came back, smiling.

"Let him go," he said. "I've told Jim Ganston, on duty below, and he'll follow him to his hotel or somewhere and have a report for me and the regular police soon."

"Good work, Carlin," said Dold. "Now, Mr. McMurdoo, let us see about your affairs."

"My affairs can wait if it is sure that after the body is cared for I can have the room," was the reply.

"I see no objection to that, providing the police can have ready access to your room during your tenancy, or, as they can force a way in, in any case, provided you will not be put out if they seek entrance to further their inquiries into this very distressing case. Our giving you the room will be contingent upon police requirements."

"I agree to all that. All I want is a place to put my grip and to change my clothing in. If needed I can sleep in another room for a night or two."

"I don't think that that will be needed, as there is no case of a contagious disease in connection with the death and no conflict with the Health Department due over that phase of it. It is a police matter, pure and simple. We can put the room in order, after the body is removed. The desk is useless without the hinged lift the police took off it. They have all Weyburne's papers. I'll have the desk moved out and a stock one from our supplies put in."

"All right, and meantime I'm going to breakfast," said McMurdoo. "I'll be about town during the day. If the room is cleaned out before I get back, have my grip moved into it and I'll go there for the night, provided I get back in time. I mean to make the hotel my general headquarters, but business and scientific matters may keep me away at times for a night or two."

Captain Edward Trevelyn of the Section of Detection was at his desk still when daylight came and there he remained, hour after hour, turning the King Cobra Mystery over in his mind, or hearing reports from his subordinates on various matters connected with it that he had had investigated, such as Mademoiselle Naga's standing in vaudevilledom, Weyburne's condition as reported by his physician and other things. The Hotel Glendon, where Mademoiselle Naga was, he had watched, and a clever woman was ready to take up the room next to the snake woman's apartment during the day, with a peephole in the door between her room and that of Mademoiselle Naga. Trevelyn had had inquiries made about Weyburne's theater, for even at an early hour the stage hands and carpenters were there, for information as to the relations between Mademoiselle Naga and Weyburne, whether pleasant or unpleasant. All these had been negative, but he hoped that when a round-up of the players was made something definite could be brought out from them, due to behind-footlights jealousies. The tremendous publicity given the case in the daily journals convinced Trevelyn that it was one calling for speedy action—the speediest possible. Already it was a *cause célèbre*.

Before Trevelyn were the photographs of the finger-prints taken from the hinged shelf of the desk in Weyburne's room. The high finish on the mahogany of that desk evidently had been cleaned with some greasy furniture polish within a day or two of the desk's use by Weyburne on the fatal night, when he and Mademoiselle Naga had discussed over it the terms of her contract, for its smooth surface was covered with a film of oily gloss which retained marks in the most minute details. By finger-printing Weyburne's dead hands before leaving the death chamber, and by making sure that all the woman's finger-prints on the desk shelf were alike, Trevelyn had arrived at the conclusion that they were made by one woman—Mademoiselle Naga. This conclusion he reached the more readily, as it coincided with his view that she was the one responsible for Weyburne's death. In any event, finger prints made by the snake woman would settle that point, he reflected.

It was while he was poring over these finger-prints that Bolton, one of his assistants, came to the door and said:

"A man to see you, sir."

Trevelyn glanced up, frowned heavily and snapped:

"I'm too busy for visitors."

"Now, captain, I know that, but he says he has something for you on the King Cobra Mystery——"

Trevelyn's eyes snapped with eagerness. He laid down the finger-prints.

"Show him in," he ordered, leaning back in his chair and facing the door with the keenest of anticipation.

PART TWO

CAPTAIN TREVELYN'S glance was cordial as he noted that the man entering behind Bolton was very short.

"Aha," he thought, "a dwarf, coming to see me. He is one of the people from one of Weyburne's acts, coming to give me a tip on something behind the scenes in this King Cobra Mystery."

The short man flipped a pasteboard over the desk at Trevelyn, who read on it:

"McMURDOO McMURDOO, BATHURST, N. J."

"What's your act?" asked Trevelyn.

"Act?" The visitor's voice was sharp, full.

The short, thick man blew a cloud of smoke through the center of his full lips into a nice round ring, blew another, out of his mouth's corner, into the center of the first and watched them telescope together.

"Yes, act. Aren't you one of Weyburne's show folk?"

"Show people?"

The short, thick man glared and blew a single ring out of the other corner of his mouth with the greatest of deliberation. He took off his hat and laid it down on top of Trevelyn's desk, rim up, took off his gloves, laid them in the hat, one by one, then took his cane and deliberately blew another smoke ring while he balanced the stick across the hat brim.

These methodical preparations, as if for a long stay, alarmed Trevelyn, who was afraid the man was one of those great bores who have absolutely no knowledge of the value of other people's time. And whose own time is of no more value than a sitting hen's.

"Yes, show people," Trevelyn exploded finally, determined to test the capacity of the stranger for absorbing shocks.

"Show people?" The short man sat down deliberately and placed a minatory finger almost under Captain Trevelyn's nose. "Show people?" he repeated. "I, sir, am a toxicologist and a herptologist."

Trevelyn eyed the man more keenly, searching his memory for something to guide him, both in recalling the man's face and the meaning of the rolling sounds of the polysyllabled words in which he seemed to delight.

"Well, sit down and shoot it," said the chief of detectives who cherished the idea that sometimes the easiest way to get rid of a bore is to let him bore a while. The man's coolness confused him.

McMurdoo laughed.

"I'm already sitting down," he said. He set fire to another cigarette. Trevelyn studied him more and more keenly and now saw that the reason he had the impression, when the visitor came in, that he was small, was because his legs were so short. His body, that part above the desk, was as large as Trevelyn's own. So it was that as McMurdoo continued to keep his pose of authority, he impressed Trevelyn more and more as a man of great mental and physical force. His roving eyes took in every detail of the office and came to rest on the finger-prints on Trevelyn's desk.

Against the desk also was leaning the swing shelf from the desk in Weyburne's room. Noticing this, McMurdoo remarked:

"I see you have here the swing shelf from Weyburne's room."

Noting that Trevelyn was astounded at his remark, he continued: "Oh, I've seen the desk and this swing shelf has the same design in the paneling as has the remainder of the desk. Mr. Dold told me you took this swing shelf to finger-print it——"

"You know Dold, then?"

McMurdoo blew a double smoke-ring with the greatest complacency. Then he replied:

"Never met him until to-day, but I have stayed often at the Hotel Allondayle, making it my headquarters when here in the city. Dold has only been proprietor of the hotel for a year now and I have not been in town, except for a day or two, in that time. I'm only recently from Rio, where I made a series of investigations into the relative virulence of the venom of the bushmaster and the rattler——"

"Indeed."

A new note of respect was in Trevelyn's voice now.

"Ah, yes."

Again he achieved a double smoke-ring.

"Do you know," he said quite simply, "I once blew two rings through the first one and on the same day found a rare specimen of the pigmy rattlesnake near Amarillo, Texas——"

"Ah! Indeed!"

It was hard to say whether Trevelyn was more interested in this statement about the snake than he was annoyed at the childish pleasure the scientist took in making smoke-rings.

"Quite so. And I am here to-day to attend a meeting of the Institute of Science and to give the city authorities information with reference to the laying out of the plans for the new reptile house at the zoo. Then I must meet Ditmars, the curator."

This last statement at once set McMurdoo right in Trevelyn's eyes. A man who had dealings with the authorities on such a matter must be a man of some importance, whose inside opinion was worth having. So it was in a very deferential voice that he inquired:

"What can you tell me about the King Cobra Mystery?"

"This—that man Weyburne was not killed by a cobra!"

"What?"

Trevelyn sat upright in his swivel chair as if he had been galvanized. He even shoved his chair back from the desk with the energy of his gesture of unbelief.

"I repeat," said McMurdoo, achieving another double smoke-ring, one ring from the left, one from the right side of his mouth, "I repeat, that man Weyburne was *not* killed by a cobra."

"What killed him, then? I suppose he died with homesickness or dementia præcox?" This was a stout man's importance.

"No: he died of a poison injected into his wrist."

"But not injected from the fangs of a cobra?"

"Not so injected, sir."

McMurdoo cast away his cigarette stump and Trevelyn watched it go with a sigh of relief. The ring-blowing had been too much for him—under the circumstances.

"But he died of poison injected into his wrist?"

"Yes, but not injected by a cobra, I repeat."

"Upon what do you base such a theory?"

"I never bother with theory, sir. I stick to facts."

"Well, then," testily, "your facts, sir."

"In the first place," McMurdoo went on, "the cobra's poison is never injected so deeply as in the Weyburne case. I saw the body of Weyburne at the hotel."

Here Trevelyn started nervously, but settled back as McMurdoo went on:

"There I assured myself that the puncture in his wrist was too deep for a cobra to have made it."

"How?"

"Do you know how long a cobra's fangs are?"

"No."

McMurdoo's face became red as he emphasized his point with up- and down-swinging arm.

"Do you mean to sit there, sir, and tell me that you have framed up a plausible theory of this case, directing public suspicion to a beautiful woman and that all the time you do not know the length of a cobra's fangs? I am astounded at you, sir."

Trevelyn, angry now, bellowed: "What has that to do with it all?"

"Do with it?"

"Yes, do with it."

"Well, Captain Trevelyn, if you say a cobra bit Weyburne, and it is susceptible of proof that the punctured wound was deeper than a cobra's fangs can penetrate, where is your confounded theory?"

He leaned back and drew out another cigarette. Treveleyn watched to see if there was to be any more ring-blowing, but there was not—just then.

Nevertheless, Trevelyn was all attention now. He pocketed his pride of theory and asked:

"Well, Mr. McMurdoo, how long are a cobra's fangs?"

"Just three-eighths of an inch, sir. And that for a very large cobra—a King Cobra. That is the utmost depth to which a very large cobra can penetrate with his fangs when striking a victim. I have proof that the puncture in Weyburne's arm was at least an inch in depth."

"Proof? Not theory?"

"No theory, sir. I leave theories to gabblers."

McMurdoo lighted his cigarette and puffed out great clouds of smoke, making ring after ring with great gusto.

"But," persisted Trevelyn, "might not the cobra's teeth been forced into the wound by Weyburne's striking the snake's head in his agony and so driving the fangs in deeper than natural, or in some other way?"

"No chance of that, man. The human eye scarcely can follow a cobra's death stroke, delivered when the creature is not confined or its body partly weighted down by something. I note in the newspaper accounts of the case that Mademoiselle Naga caught the cobra after it had been under a wastebasket for some time. That was because the serpent struck at her blindly, on the instant the basket was overturned, after being long cramped under the basket. She probably knew it could not strike with accuracy under such conditions and so caught it. All such secrets are known to the snake men and women of the Far East. I have seen her pictures on the show-bills, and she appears like a very brainy woman, sir."

"I admit her brain power, for it was displayed last night."

"And another thing: Even if Weyburne had seen the cobra, he would have been too late in striking at its head to have caused its fangs to bury themselves to an unusual depth in his flesh because the snake would have withdrawn its head before he would have struck at it."

"But the man was stung on the wrist; a cobra *was* in the room." Trevelyn's pudgy finger was pointing now, in emphasis

"That is the trouble with you. You have made me a hand-me-down theory and want to fit all the facts in this interesting case to it. I have been trained to get the facts, and that the facts, of and in and by themselves, constitute not a theory, but a living chain of evidence."

McMurdoo leaned back in his chair with the greatest of satisfaction.

"But, sir," said Trevelyn, "all you have given me so far is an opinion."

McMurdoo was gavanized into instant action. He leaned over the desk as far as his short body would permit and shook his fist almost in under Trevelyn's nose. His other hand dropped the cigarette and grasped a paper-weight, with which he thumped on the desk to emphasis his words as he shouted:

"An opinion? I have given you a fact, sir, a fact. I doubt if you would know a fact if it bit you on the nose, sir. This fact is this, to wit, viz:

"The cobra has teeth not to exceed three-eighths of an inch in length, whereas Weyburne's arm was punctured an inch, into the pulse artery and upward. That precludes the cobra theory altogether, completely, comprehensively, all—inclusively, absolutely. I, myself, personally insist upon it, sir."

"But a cobra *was* in the room."

"So am I in this room, but so far I've not bitten a piece out of your right arm."

Trevelyn stared at the chunky man angrily.

"Well," he said, "any more theo—I mean facts?"

For answer McMurdoo reached into his vest pocket and pulled out a wisp of paper, which he cast onto the desk.

"Unroll that—carefully," he said.

Trevelyn did so, and in the center saw half a hundred little specks that shone like gold dust.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Dust. I got it off the carpet at the end of the steam radiator at the head of Weyburne's bed."

"But what is it? Gold dust?"

"No; it is powder that comes off a pipe that has been 'gold painted' when it is tampered with or screwed in or out of a thread at a joint."

"Well, what else?"

Trevelyn was not much impressed with the "gold dust." That was very plain.

"This."

McMurdoo cast another wisp of cigarette paper onto the desk.

Trevelyn picked it up and unrolled it. It's contents, like those of the other wisp, gleamed, but the sheen was white, not golden. Inside was a very slender, shiny, sharp thing. Trevelyn at once began to test its point against the ball of one of his fingers when McMurdoo warned him:

"Careful, man; a prick with that might cause serious trouble."

Trevelyn dropped the shiny needle like a flash. He glanced at McMurdoo, who added:

"That is the needle of a hyperdermic syringe, or part of it."

"Where did *you* get it?"

"From the puncture in Weyburne's arm!"

Trevelyn shoved back his chair and got up wildly. His eyes were staring at McMurdoo in almost superstitious terror.

"Impossible," he ejaculated.

"Why impossible? Another thing still." McMurdoo's voice took on a compelling accent of conviction as he proceeded:

"A man bitten by a cobra does not die in a moment, as Weyburne seems to have died. He dies quickly, but the poison acts as a deadener of the nerve and lassitude and collapse come on more gradually than it came in this case. In Weyburne's case we have a single scream of terror and when the door is opened, a few moments only later, the corpse is found on the floor. He should have lived fifteen minutes, even with his weak heart. I suppose you have some sort of a report from his physician as to his physical condition during recent weeks?"

There came a knock at the door and in response to Trevelyn's invitation Bolton walked in, laid a sheet of paper at Trevelyn's elbow and went out.

"Aha, what have we here?" And Trevelyn opened out the folded sheet and scanned it.

"I told my man to come in if he got a report from the doctor who had been attending Weyburne," he said. "Here it is. It is from Doctor Allson, of Weyburne's home town, where he also has a vaudeville house and stays part of the time. Allson is his family physician. Let me read it. Well, what do you make of this: 'Weyburne had been addicted to the use of morphine in small doses for years and, as a matter of friendship, I supplied him with small quantities of the drug whenever he came to me, as a matter of course and without prescription, also with syringes, when he broke his. If his arm is examined it will show some puncture marks.'"

McMurdoo sputtered a moment, set fire to a cigarette, blew a pair of double rings.

"Also," went on Trevelyn, "the doctor reports that Weyburne had a valvular affection of the heart, not serious, but bad enough to have caused his heart to give out under great stress."

McMurdoo continued to smoke. A grin spread all around Trevelyn's face as he read anew that Weyburne used the hyperdermic needle.

"Can you imagine," said McMurdoo suddenly, "a cobra so accurate that he would sting a man on the exact spot and at the exact moment he had broken off a hyperdermic needle in his arm?"

"No, but I can imagine the needle broken off days before, and being in his flesh without his knowing it. According to what I've read needles have traveled all through the bodies of people——"

"How do you explain this fact, then——"

"What, another fact?" said Trevelyn snappily.

"Yes. The fact that a cobra has *two* fangs. There was only *one* puncture in Weyburne's arm."

"One fang may have missed or been broken. Mademoiselle Naga herself owned she pulled the fangs from her snakes."

Puff! Puff! from McMurdoo. Then two smoke-rings.

"And another thing," Trevelyn went on, "how do you account for the finding of that slip of rice paper in Weyburne's desk and on it the word 'Beware!' and the mark like a human eye, and the further fact that Mademoiselle Naga has such a mark on her forehead as part of her make-up for her act?"

"Man, man, would she send such a mark to him, after wearing it in public before thousands of people, many of whom scan her with opera glasses every night? Give her credit for some brains, if not for integrity. All Far Eastern snake folk wear that mark. It is merely the mark of their goddess, Siva."

Trevelyn was silent for a moment, then asked, as if completely baffled:

"Well, what is your theory, then?"

"Theory?" McMurdoo bellowed the word and sent out greater and greater clouds of smoke.

"Theory," he went on. "I have no theories. I have some facts, as follows: The puncture was too deep for a cobra to have made it; I found 'gold paint' dust on the carpet; the puncture was single, not double. Now, if you arrest Mademoiselle Naga, how far will your theory go in open court before a male jury, with that beautiful girl in the dock and me on the witness-stand, with my reputation, which is not inconsiderable, testifying for her and her lawyer one of the greatest reputation?"

"Not very far," admitted Trevelyn reluctantly. "But what killed Weyburne?"

"Poison injected into his arm."

"My theory precisely."

"Not a theory. A fact."

"Still it is possible to theorize on a given set of facts."

"Possible for *you*, sir, but impossible for *me*. That is another fact. The judge in a trial lays down the law; the jury considers the facts. There is no room, or had not ought to be, for theory."

"You seem to be well versed in jury practice." With keen sarcasm, that did not penetrate the armor of McMurdoo's earnestness.

"I may be better versed than you, captain."

McMurdoo got up, picked up his cane, cast away his cigarette, put on his hat, pulled on one glove while he held his cane tucked under his arm, then put on the other glove, with perfect composure. The shreds of annoyance caused by the wordy debate he had had with Trevelyn were gone from his face. Apparently he had dismissed all such irritation from his mind.

"Well, captain," he said, holding out his small, even dainty, hand in its casing of correct glove-leather, "excuse me for taking up so much time." His handclasp was cordial.

"No excuse is necessary." replied Trevelyn, with the idea somehow sticking in the back part of his head that the short man was excusing himself with a feeling of inner triumph.

"Perhaps you can give me some information, captain. I have been immersed in abstruse scientific investigations for a year, here and in Brazil, and have not kept track of what has gone on in the outside world. I live in Bathurst with a maiden sister who looks after me, and when I go into my scientific storm cellar and close the lid, nothing comes to me that she does not approve of, until I emerge. In addition to my inquiries in Brazil into the relative virulence of bushmaster and rattler venom, in my capacity as herptologist, I have been, as toxicologist, inquiring into the possibility of a preventive for the effects of poison gas upon our soldiers abroad. I am here to-day to make an address on that before one section of the Institute of Science. On my way I read the accounts of this King Cobra case. Admiring mademoiselle because of her daring and beauty, which I have read of and judged from pictures of her act in the journals, I was much interested in the case. My first intention was to call on Police Commissioner John Randall, but as I did not know if he still managed to survive the shifts of the political whirligig——"

"Oh, yes, Commissioner Randall is still head of the department."

"Well, you call him up and tell him McMurdoo McMurdoo was in and talked of the case to you, captain, and also that he can find me at the Allondayle if you want me later in the day. Or, in case of extraordinary stress, you may find me at the hall of the Institute of Science, where I shall read this morning a paper on 'Cyanides and Their Industrial and Belligerent Uses.' Or you may catch me at the meeting of the Park Commission, where I shall give advice on the laying out of the new reptile house or very late in the day I may be with Curator Ditmars, my friend, and one of the world's greatest herptologists."

McMurdoo went out, striding along sturdily on his short legs, swinging his cane, humming a little tune, his high hat somewhat back on his head, his black coat tails agitated with the vigor of his progress. Only for the fact that he was of weight in the world of higher science Trevelyn would have grinned at the important little figure behind his back, but the recollection of the short man's reputation checked any such tendency on his part.

Trevelyn reached for his desk phone as soon as McMurdoo's coat tails had been whisked around the door-jamb into the corridor. His call, given in the right code, to the operator at police headquarters, put Commissioner Randall on the wire at once.

"McMurdoo in town!" the commissioner said, as soon as Trevelyn had given him the information he had. "Well, Ed, you keep close to that little runt, hear me? It is the first time he has showed himself in public yet in any of the cases he has condescended to take an interest in. He will not touch an ordinary case. It must be one of great interest, along his own lines, before he will sniff at it, even. He takes them up as a means of intellectual enjoyment, to rest his brain from his regular work, like you go fishing to forget your troubles.

"Remember that Ptomaine Slaughter, as the papers called it, out in Chicago some years ago? The case where the crazy chemist killed so many people by sending them candy through the mail? Well, McMurdoo solved that case. Also the Tchegatieff lead fume poison case and other famous criminal mysteries, as well as obscure points relating to the action of poisons in manufacturing and in chemical processes. You haven't heard of him before now because he always has done business with me direct, bobbing in and out of cases on his own motion, or I have gone to him direct with cases and he has consented to investigate them in his own way. I have left such cases with him, and in a short time he has brought me a complete chain of facts and turned them over to me. He hates theories, I tell you, Ed. Don't mention theory to him, will you?

"We are in luck that he has consented to notice this case. Money wouldn't tempt him, if it didn't interest him. He's too rich to care for more money. Gets his money in gobs from the big corporations for opinions on processes and the like. Just let him alone. I'd rather have him on this cobra case than all of us combined, I tell you, Ed. If he asks for any help, to cover any minor point, turn the department inside-out for him."

"Will I send a man to keep with him or go myself, to show our interest?"

"No; keep away and let him run it himself unless he asks for aid."

"Whew!" said Trevelyn softly to himself, after hanging up the receiver with his respect for the short man increased a hundredfold. "He looks like a minnow, but he must be a whale."

With which thought in his mind, Trevelyn went out to get a tardy breakfast and after that to seek some repose, leaving orders that he was to be called if anything new developed and also suspending all investigations by the regular force into the King Cobra Mystery, in accordance with his orders from Commissioner Randall.

As for McMurdoo, he had gone to the curb, where his chugging taxi stood, marking off time against him, a fact that did not seem to give the fact hunter any worry. Swinging his cane gaily, the distinguished man said tersely:

"To the Glendon, driver."

He leaned back comfortably in the richly upholstered seat of the expensive car like one accustomed to take matters easily.

Arrived at the Glendon, McMurdoo had his card at once sent up to the room of Mademoiselle Naga. The hotel was in part of the theatrical district, near Weyburne's house, and at it many theatrical folk stopped—those of the higher class. On the corner of his card McMurdoo had written:

"From one who desires to assist you."

Ushered into Mademoiselle Naga's apartment, he found her, attired in a beautiful pink morning gown, trimmed with yellow lace and with a rose in her closely coiled sloe-black hair, studying his card. She was seated at an escritoire in the center of the room. She arose as he entered and greeted him with a pretty gesture of welcome.

"At such a time," she said, "a friend is doubly welcome. You see, I accept the line on your card at its face value."

She spoke with the faintest trace of a French accent that was charming. Her voice was soft, dulcet, her every gesture easy, her presence calmative, gracious.

"Let us be comfortable, monsieur, at once. To what do I owe the honor of your call?"

"To the fact that you, like myself, are engaged in the same line of endeavor, to a certain extent, at least. You train dangerous serpents and so must make a study of them. I study deep, but do not train them."

Again she parted her mobile, tender lips in a flashing smile at him.

"Explain yourself more clearly, at leisure, monsieur," she said, motioning him to a chair at the side of the escritoire. He gravely sat down, took his hat, laid it rim up on the escritoire, took off his gloves one by one and placed them inside the hat, balanced his cane on the hat's rim. Then he carefully pulled up his trouser legs a bit to keep them from losing their crease and then glanced at the

pretty woman opposite him. She met his glance frankly and smiled a smile that rippled off into a laugh, like that of a highly pleased child.

"You seem cheerful under the weight of the charge the newspapers seem to make against you," he remarked, plunging into the case at once. "Especially as I see by some of the stories that you and Weyburne were very, very good friends."

"Good friends? Yes, monsieur, but no more. It was not, as the prints hint, a case where we were engaged to wed. He was good to me as a manager; I have been conscientious to him, as a player. That is all."

McMurdoo's eyes sparkled as he remarked: "Well, be cheerful, anyway. It doesn't cost any more than to be glum."

"And why should I not be cheerful, monsieur," she said, "when I am not guilty of these so grave charges? Of them I am not guilty." Her dark eyes flashed.

"But let us not be excited," she went on. "Will you smoke?" producing cigarettes from a cubby in the escritoire.

"If I have your permission, mademoiselle."

He took a little cylinder of tobacco and lighted it, puffing comfortably. Suddenly he achieved a double smoke-ring, admired it with open pleasure. Noting that she was watching him with a puzzled expression, he said: "Don't mind my little oddities. Blowing them helps me to think."

She clapped her pink palms together and threw back her well-poised head and laughed with complete abandon. McMurdoo eyed her and chuckled down somewhere behind his black vest and starched shirt.

"I know you are not guilty," he said, when she had calmed down a bit, "because that's what I've just been telling Captain Trevelyn."

"Then you have seen the head of the Section of Detection? I do not fear the newspapers, as the boys who work on them will be fair, as they always have, and especially kind to me with their notices."

"Yes; I have seen Trevelyn within the hour."

"He holds, then, to his ridiculous theory——"

"He is all theory, but I gave him a few facts that will upset it."

"Ah?" A note of piquant interrogation in her voice and a gesture of the same in her whole keenly observant attitude.

"Where do you keep your cobras, mademoiselle?" he asked, glancing about the room.

"In those chests," waving her strong, supple hand toward the rear of the room, which was spacious. There McMurdoo saw two large teakwood chests, each carved with twin dragons, each on a pedestal. A row of ventilating holes about the chests showed that the chests were used to contain living creatures.

"You affirmed to Trevelyn," said McMurdoo, regarding the chests with interest, "that upon your return here from the Allondayle last night you found, after adding the cobra from there to yours, that you had seven serpents, whereas you should have had six."

"Such are the facts. Watch!"

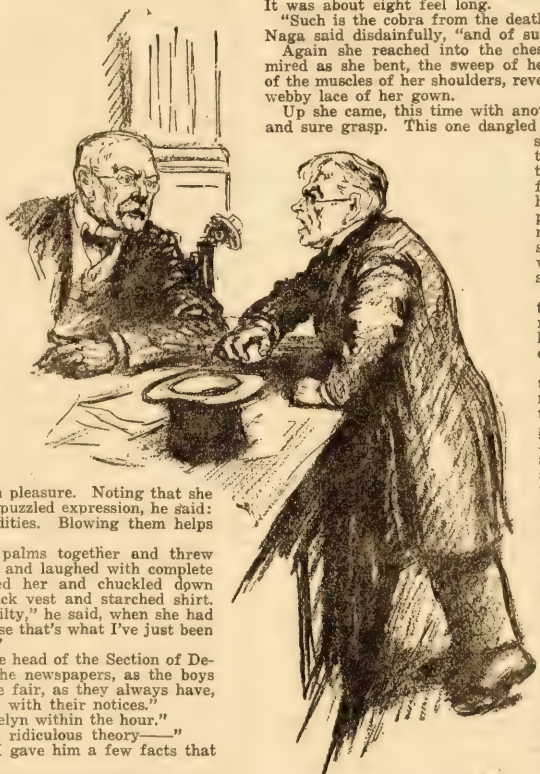
The snake woman left her chair and went toward the two chests with the sinuous ease of one in perfect health and vigor.

"See," she said, throwing back the lid of one chest. She plunged a shapely arm into the chest's interior to the elbow and drew out a writhing cobra, which she cast onto the rug which covered most of the room's floor. At once the deadly hamadryad threw itself into its fighting coil, with upreared hood, all ready to strike. Its venomous head swayed, its red tongue played like a thread of flame. It was about eight feel long.

"Such is the cobra from the death room," Mademoiselle Naga said disdainfully, "and of such are my own pets."

Again she reached into the chest and McMurdoo admired as she bent, the sweep of her bust lines, the play of the muscles of her shoulders, revealed under the spider-webby lace of her gown.

Up she came, this time with another cobra in her firm and sure grasp. This one dangled contentedly down and she caught up its mottled loops and festooned them about her beautiful forearm, where the heavy body of the serpent came to rest, remaining quiet while she rubbed its head with her left hand softly.



He leaned over the desk as far as his short body would permit and shook his fist almost in under Trevelyn's nose.

In sharp contrast, the wild cobra on the rug did not cease to hiss and make hostile demonstrations.

"Pouf, pouf for you!" the agile woman said, making at the swaying terror a disdainful gesture with the toe of her dainty pink silk slipper. Turning, with a deft motion, she dropped the trained cobra into the chest and stood over it to keep the other hamadryads in, some of them showing signs of a desire to glide forth and exercise.

"No, the cobra, like all other poisonous serpents, usually will not attack a human being unless cornered. But the ophiophagi have been known to do it. So be careful, mademoiselle. He may keep away from you, but you never can tell what one of these untamed serpents will do," said McMurdoo, finishing his smoke.

He had been watching Mademoiselle Naga from his seat near the escritoire. Now he got up, picked up his cane, pressed sharply on one of the knots on it, and from its end a fine white cord unrolled, falling into a noose, seemingly of itself, from its own weight. Holding the cane before him, McMurdoo, before Mademoiselle Naga could interfere, cast the loop over the cobra's head and so held the writhing serpent clear of the rug.

"Permit me," he said, dropping the snake over the edge of the chest. He pressed the knob on the cane again and the noose untwisted, permitting the snake to fall into the chest.

"Quick!" he urged.

Mademoiselle Naga, catching his meaning at once, let fall the lid of the teakwood respectacle.

She held out both hands to him, her eyes beaming with warm camaraderie.

"You are so clever," she breathed.

"But I would not pick him up with bare hands as you did last night at the hotel, mademoiselle. I've handled rattlers and other pit vipers, but never a wild cobra, with bare hands."

"Nor would I, again. I took the chance that he was not in the best of condition last night, after being under the wastebasket, and perhaps in a box a long time before being placed in Mr. Weyburne's room. But to-day he is like a flash. I was prepared to use my snake crook"—indicating a peculiarly shaped stick hanging back of the chests—"on him, in order to get him back into his place, but your device and skill have made that unnecessary."

McMurdoo stepped back to the escritoire and laid down the cane. He resumed his seat and remarked in his usual brisk, business-like tone:

"I use my cane often in my rambles to pick up serpents that I meet. It is one of my little inventions to further my study of interesting specimens. Of course, at home I handle my own serpents——"

"Is monsieur, then, in the profession?" She came toward him eagerly.

"No, mademoiselle. Nothing but a plodding, methodical scientist, a student of toxicology and herptology," and he smiled engagingly at her.

Mademoiselle Naga seated herself on the other side of the escritoire and regarded him with renewed interest.

"Of the science of poisons, aside from serpent venom," she said, "I have little knowledge, but in my own way I have learned much of serpent venom."

"Then did it not strike you as astounding that Weyburne should have died so suddenly after being stung, when in the nature of things he should have lived half an hour, to say the least."

"Not in the least. I knew that his heart was weak——"

"Aha!"

"As I told you, Monsieur McMurdoo, we were very, very friendly, but all in a business way."

She paused and regarded him frankly, even appealingly.

"And so you concluded that the bite of the serpent caused his heart to fail?"

"Exactly."

McMurdoo passed his small, slender, strong hand over his brow with a gesture of mock despair.

"Always theories," he said; "theories that lead nowhere and come from nothingness. This case interested me at once upon reading of it coming in on the train this morning. I got a paper on the Jersey side before entering the tube. I saw at once it was all a case of theory, and I judged from what I read that those theories boded no good to you, an innocent and I may say a lovely young woman, mademoiselle."

Gratitude and pleasure were mingled in the bright glance with which she repaid him for his confidence and compliment.

In a few words he gave her his reasons for believing her to be innocent, telling her of the finding of the "gold paint" dust on the floor of Weyburne's room, of the hyperdermic needles in the wound and calling attention to the fact that Weyburne's body had been found in a posture of contorted agony, instead of relaxed from gradual loss of sensation, the concomitant of a cobra's bite.

"That row of facts," he said, "oversets all the rows of theories that they have marshaled against you."

"And you, M. McMurdoo, what further shall you do?"

"I? Hunt for more facts, as usual. Facts are the basis of all progress; theories undermine all progress. Let us stick to facts."

"By all means, monsieur, especially as long as they work for me as they are working now."

"Another ridiculous thing," he said, "is this reference to that bit of rice paper, with the word 'Beware' on it, and the mark of an eye on it. And trying to connect it with the mark on your brow."

"Indeed, yes. That is a mere coincidence."

"Did you ever think that some enemy of yours might have used such a mark, by design, to injure you?"

She shuddered now and glanced about apprehensively. Then she smiled, then laughed.

"Fie, fie," she said, "you will make my flesh to crawl on its bones. No one on *this* side of the world would care to harm poor little me."

"But on the *other* side?"

"The other side is far, far off, and I—I may never go back to it."

"You may, indeed, mademoiselle, secure an engagement that will keep you over here a long time. Merit is rewarded. Especially in your profession."

"You are so good to say so."

"And now permit me, with my own eyes, to count the cobras in your chests." He lighted a cigarette.

"I have seven. I had six."

"I do not doubt you, but it is the fundamental principle of my system never to take any one's word for anything when making an investigation. I even disregard noted textbooks when making scientific researches, unless those I have written myself, and those I seldom refer to because my memory is so prodigious that I carry most of them in my head. What I know, I know I know. What some one else thinks he knows may be—only—only——"

"Only a theory?" she finished for him, clapping her hands with delight.

"Exactly, exactly." And he promptly achieved another double smoke-ring.

"Come, come!"

She took his hand and they went together back to the teakwood chests. First she threw up the cover of the nearest one, and McMurdoo counted three upreared hoods as the cobras raised themselves toward the light. She put the lid of the first chest down and raised that of the second. McMurdoo counted three scaly hoods again. The fourth head he saw, by leaning over, hidden under the mottled coils of the other three serpents.

"The wild one is sulky," Mademoiselle Naga explained, "and does not show himself unless I force him to come out."

She dropped the chest lid.

"A sure sign of bad temper in a serpent," said the herptologist with an air of authority. "He will die in captivity because too sulky to eat."

"You are well informed, monsieur, even in minor points," she said, as she went with him toward the door. There he shook hands with her with an elaborate old-fashioned politeness, then invited her to go to supper with him. She agreed to, after her act, she having been informed that the Weyburne Theater was not to close, except the day of the funeral.

"By all means carry on your act, as if nothing had happened," he said. "Do not be as if crushed by this monstrous accusation made against you. I'll call for you early to-night."

For some moments after he had gone she sat pensively turning over the pasteboard upon which was printed his name. In her long career handling serpents she had become accustomed to the aversion with which almost all people treated her. Now, in the time of trouble, a highly intelligent man, of unique personality, had come to her and offered her assistance in a disinterested way when she needed it most. And, not less in her woman's eyes, he had paid her straightforward compliments that she had relished. And he understood more about her strange pets in some respects than she did herself.

It was with a grateful smile on her face that she telephoned to the Weyburne Theater's box-office to have a box seat reserved for her new friend.

That done, she turned to her mirror and seemed to find what she saw there very gratifying.

To her maid who came in presently in answer to her call, she remarked:

"Decidedly, Marie, good goods are done up in small packages."

What this meant the maid had no means of knowing

"Where now, sir?" asked the taxi man as McMurdoo emerged from the Glendon.

"To Sims & Sims, animal dealers, upper Fifth avenue," said McMurdoo, lighting a new cigarette just before entering the vehicle. Inside, after the machine was started, he lolled back, his short legs swinging free of the floor of the cab, blowing ring after ring of smoke out of the line of the car's progress and watching them dissolve. He had mentioned to the driver the address of the largest dealers of wild animals in the two Americas.

The taxi bowled along through the traffic stream and came to the designated place in short order. No sooner had it stopped than McMurdoo stepped briskly down and went across the walk to its door with energetic little steps to the head of the stairway that led to the basement store of Sims & Sims.

"Aha, Mr. McMurdoo," a bony, nervous man greeted him, as he came down to the level of the store; "glad to see you; what can we offer you this morning?"

"Good-morning," replied McMurdoo, passing rapidly down the line of cages and toward the rear of the place. Monkeys chattered, little dogs barked, medium-sized dogs whined; a cockatoo screamed, a macaw made raucous complaint. In a tank in the room's center several fair-sized alligators were stretched out lazily under the electric lights, as comfortable, apparently, in man-made sunshine and heat as if they were yawning at the Palm Beachers from a tank in the garden of some Southern hotel's grounds. The mingled smells from such a collection were expelled from the place by a rapidly revolving electric fan that hummed against a ventilating pipe's end against the rear wall. It was just under this that McMurdoo paused. There was the snake collection.

"We have several fine copperheads that Copperhead Bill sent in last week from Hale's Eddy," said Sims, who had been following his well-known patron closely.

"I don't care to see them to-day. I may to-morrow or in a few days——"

"A fine diamond-back rattler here from Florida."

Sims pointed to a coil of finely penciled mottled coils, from which the dread arrow-shaped head stood out, ready to strike against the plate glass front of the reptile's pen. Sullenly the rattles went "Click, click, click," as the rattles of that serpent do when merely giving warning against the approach of a distant menace. McMurdoo struck the plate glass with the end of his cane and the great rattler sprang his alarm, the buzz of it arising in menacing, sharp overtones.

"He is a lively one," McMurdoo said, admiringly, "but I am looking for something more rare still than he is. In a letter from you on February 15, which I found at home upon arriving recently from Rio, I found that you mentioned having prospects of having here, for inspection at least, a King Cobra or Naja Bungaris. Having so recently studied the lancehead viper in Brazil, I have a curiosity to see this cobra——"

"Oh, Mr. McMurdoo, if I had only known you wanted him! He was a beauy, well proportioned, not the largest of his kind, but active and fierce—untamable, I believe."

"Was? Then he is gone?"

"Yes; sold a week ago. You will remember that I wrote you he would be here for inspection. That was a hint to you to come and see him, if you cared to. He really came on an order from Malacca. The order was phoned to the store. Cash came to bind the bargain next day, and it came by a messenger from a hotel—or he might have been a depot porter; it's hard to tell—anyway, he was a colored fellow in a uniform. I cabled the order and the snake came in four weeks from my depot of supplies for Malaysia, at Singapore, whence I receive so many of those rare monkeys, lemurs, atlas moths, peacock butterflies and birds-of-paradise."

"Describe the buyer or tell where he is."

"I never saw the real buyer."

"What?"

"No; it was like this, as I told you in part before. The order came, as I said, through a messenger, a colored man. He came in at the end of the time I told him it would take the cobra to arrive. He looked it over, said it would suit his patron. It was for use in a theatrical performance of some kind, he said. A day or two later he came in, with a woven basket he had brought for that purpose, and into which I placed the Naja for him."

"Describe him." McMurdoo, who had lighted a cigarette, was blowing smoke-rings with energy and rare skill.

"He was about five feet five inches in height, slight, very black, a negro, with a wavy scar on his chin running back under his jaw on the left side."

"Any other peculiar marks?"

"Yes. On his forehead there was a mark like a tattoo mark that looked like an eye."

"Good!" McMurdoo puffed several rings from his mobile lips in rapid succession. "But do you remember how the voice sounded that gave you the original order for the cobra?"

"Perfectly. It was soft and clear, with a slight foreign accent."

"Have you read of the King Cobra Mystery, Sims?"

"Yes. And I would not be at all surprised if the cobra that porter bought was for her."

"*Her?*" A double ring, blown in sudden agitation.

"Yes, her. I mean that show-girl, Mademoiselle Naga."

"Well, sir, it is not an established *fact*. She hardly would send an ordinary colored porter here to buy a snake like that, and she would not easily pick up a porter in an American hotel who would walk off unconcernedly with a cobra in a woven basket and march through the streets with it."

"But my theory is——"

"Tut, tut, Mr. Sims. How often have I told you not to mind theories, but to stick to facts?"

And before the astounded animal dealer could apologize or mollify his distinguished patron the nimble short man had skipped clear through the place, up the steps and onto the sidewalk.

"Where now?" asked the taxi driver, as the scientist appeared in front.

"To the Branscome." McMurdoo eased himself back and set fire to a fresh cigarette which he enjoyed during his ride to the hotel, one of those in the block a square away from the fringes of the chief theater district.

At the Branscome office desk McMurdoo made inquiry:

"Upon what floor here does Mr. Samtra Hurribruddha reside?"

"Fourteenth," said the obliging clerk. "Do you wish to see him?"

"Is he in?"

"Yes, and the room directory shows he is open to callers," waving his hand to the indexed card rack back of his station.

"He has some kind of business he carries on here?"

"Yes, a large sample room and two other rooms. He does a wholesale business in Oriental merchandise, dealing with the big department stores."

"I will go up," said McMurdoo decisively.

"Show this gentleman to No. 1435," ordered the clerk to an eager bellhop, whose attention to the order induced McMurdoo to reflect that the man to whom he was going must pay liberal tips.

Before 1435 McMurdoo dismissed the boy. He knocked and entered as the door swung wide. He glanced curiously at the person who had admitted him—a gigantic black, in silken, baggy trousers of scarlet, sarong of deepest blue, with a snowy turban piled up on his forehead. Just over his brows' middle line was a corrugation on his forehead that seemed to be in the skin itself. He smiled urbanely at McMurdoo, then salaamed.

"Did you come from the San Juan district?" McMurdoo asked, grinning at the black. There was no reply, save a motion that said "I do not understand."

"Well, it's a good advertising dodge," said McMurdoo, quite loudly.

The room he was in clearly was only a reception-room. Glancing through it, McMurdoo could see a bedroom beyond, and a sample room, the three *en suite*.

A low-voiced order in some foreign tongue came to the servitor, who ushered McMurdoo along to the sample room, where he was greeted effusively by the man who had tried to get him to give up 1313 at the Allondayle earlier in the morning.

"Then, on reflection, you deecided are to let me have the room in the Allondayle?" he queried eagerly.

"On the contrary, I prefer to keep it. I sleep there to-night."

The Oriental's face flushed with resentment.

"Then why do you eentrude on mee here?" he demanded.

"To give you some facts and to seek for some."

"As to the keeling of that poor Weyburne?"

"Exactly.'"

McMurdoo glanced about him. The sample room was a large one, fronting on a court or space between the great buildings on all sides. On trestles, on tables, on racks and hooks on the walls were Oriental wares—silks, embroidered shawls, Benares hand-carved brasses, bird-of-paradise feather fans, peacock feather fans, screens, hand-painted porcelain and silver bangle work of the most exquisite kinds. On a coil-hook was a section of hard woven rope of peculiar weave and thrust negligently into it were four or five small arrows, but there was no bow.

Noticing that McMurdoo was regarding these latter objects closely. Hurribruddha laughed and said:

"I deepend not on the fire-escape of theese hotel. If fire comes, shutting us off, I go down by my own ropes. As for theese arrows, they are curios from America, bought by me in Nyagyra Falls."

"I see," said McMurdoo. "But to return: I came here for facts and to give you facts."

"But why here seek facts? In theese room was I when Mr. Weyburne he was keeled. Keeled by that Naga woman——"

"Who says she killed him? I have taken a keen personal interest in her case and shall hold you or any one else responsible for any charges made against her."

Here McMurdoo made a move, almost threatening, toward the Oriental merchant.

Hurribruddha started from his chair as if he had been stung, shouting:

"Every one accuses her. The newspapers, they do, the pooleece. Even in the crowd in the hotel had one who deenowenc-ed her for her huge wrong."

"All based on theory," snapped McMurdoo. "You say you were in your rooms when she was doing the killing?"

"You despise theories and rely, then, onlee on naked facts?"

The Oriental was animated now, gesticulating wildly.

"Yes."

"Then I a fact shall show you. Come!"

"Here," said Hurribruddha, striding to a little desk in the room's corner and throwing open a ledger there, "you shall by theese eentries obsarve that last evening I was here, pricing goods, on which duty I am meethodeecal, entering time, place, of reeseet, of sheepment, of first deesplay and of merchants to which I theem offer. Such save me time, makes small freection. See theese entray: 'Tuesday, May 28, from Malacca, eight squares silver bangle work, opened at 5.30 p. m., after coming from show, priced at $150 the square, offered to Miss Elizabeth Smith, buyer for McCardle & Quirk and by her purchased for delivery on May 29.'" Such was the well-written entry McMurdoo read.

"Meese Smeeth she is my guest at the show last night, and here she came, with a ladee friend to see those so splendid bangle squares. And here is check of McCardle & Quirk, payment for same."

He produced a check from a pigeon-hole in the desk.

"Theese check came by messenger who came theese morning for those bangle squares," the Oriental explained eagerly.

"It all seems to be in order on that head, except that you are so anxious to convince a stranger that you are in possession of a good alibi and especially as no one has said you had anything to do with killing Weyburne."

This remark McMurdoo made with irritating suavity, his head tipped a bit to one side, his lips curled back in a sneer.

The Oriental started at him, his teeth bared in a sudden snarl. He muttered some phrases in a queer jargon.

"No; you will not kill me," said McMurdoo calmly, as the Oriental started back in surprise. "I understand your dialect and, if you talk much more to me in it, I'll name your exact tribe. I once spent two years in Malacca in the study of herptology and did much business with Kling merchants like you there, getting together stuff for my expeditions."

Hurribruddha softened his tone, as he replied:

"Forgive me for thus unfortunately bursting out upon you. Your accusation horreefied me."

"I made no accusation; positively none. You seem bound to accuse yourself."

"I? I accuse myself? Preeposterious."

The Oriental made a gesture of deepest disdain. Then he mastered his emotion with a great effort and held out his brown hand to McMurdoo, saying:

"But why jabber we theese way over a thing that to us both is immateerial?"

"Immaterial? Then don't you think it material that you persist in denying charges that are not made?"

"But you have a theeoree in reegard to me——"

"No theory at all. Facts. One is that you persist in denying a charge not made—against you."

The Oriental threw up both hands as if in despair as against such obstinacy. His brown face fairly crackled with rage as he thundered:

"I am not denying; I explain."

"Well," came the whiplike retort, "an explanation is on par with an alibi, any time. If I were in the police department I'd have you explaining things more fully, sir. But being only a private citizen, with a deep, deep interest in the welfare of Mademoiselle Naga, so unjustly accused, and whom I hope to have a *better* right to defend, I can do nothing but protest. I would not be surprised if you knew more than you have let on."

He puffed himself up as he said this, took out a cigarette in the midst of his oration, lit it at its close and began to blow double smoke-rings with the greatest enjoyment. He cocked his high hat well back on his head and stamped with his heavy cane on the floor so close to Hurribruddha's toes that he made him draw them back to escape the impact.

"Pouf! Your swank does not eempress me in the least," the Kling flung at him. "I have been long citizen of your great countree, beefore that fully educated in Eenglish and French in Malacca and Bombay. I know of men and affayrees too much to awed be by you, sir."

McMurdoo seemed to cast off all restraints.

"Dirty dog of a Kling, to snarl at me so!" he shouted, brandishing his cane and emitting a smoke cloud like a furnace.

He got up nimbly and flung out of the room, into the bedroom and into the reception hall, where he almost overturned the turbanned giant in waiting there and noted that that swart servitor was scowling now. McMurdoo had a goodly start of Hurribruddha, who had to go around several chairs and the desk in starting his pursuit of his extraordinary guest. When the Kling arrived in the reception-room it was to find his servant nursing an aching nose, caused by contact with the door that McMurdoo had slammed in his face.

But once out in the hall and finding that the Kling had remained in his own apartments and that there was no one in sight, McMurdoo smoothed the scowls from his brow, moderated his pace and when the elevator came to floor fourteen, in answer to his ring, the scientist was smiling so expansively that the elevator man felt in good humor for an hour after he had deposited the jolly hunchback onto the main floor of the great hostelry.

In a phone booth McMurdoo soon had connection with McCardle & Quirk, where he had Miss Smith, the Oriental-ware buyer on the wire, and she informed him that

she had made the purchase the night before from Hurribruddha, as he had said. But she had been at this room, with her friend, another buyer, at ten, not at eleven, as stated by the Kling.

After this, it being about 11 o'clock, McMurdoo found his taxi and had it speeded to the large public hall where the Institute of Science was holding its annual sessions, and there sedately appeared upon its program, taking his manuscript from his pocket at the very moment he was ushered onto the stage from the wings and launched at once into his theme:

"Cyanides and Their Industraial Uses and Belligerent Misuses and Suggestions for After-Treatment of Gassed Troops."

His colleagues gave him due attention and generous applause as he closed his address, promptly at noon, the moment allotted for the completion of his lecture. Accepting easily the plaudits and beaming when Braley of the *Scientific American* came to interview him on the relative virulence of the venom of the bushmaster and the fer-de-lance, McMurdoo managed to escape from the press of his admirers at 12.20 o'clock and going back to his taxi, gave it an order that sent it chugging along toward the Allondayle, where he went for lunch, which he ate with a keen appetite after the many and varied activities of his morning.

Following a satisfactory lunch, McMurdoo appeared on the main floor of the hotel, where he went to the office and inquired for his mail, which he received. He was about to withdraw to the lounging-room to open his letters, when he was accosted by Captain Trevelyn, who had been awaiting him near the office for some time.

McMurdoo drew the head of the Section of Detection into the lounging-room, where they found a deserted alcove for their chat.

"The coroner's physician is withholding the publication of his findings, at my request," the detective chief said. "What had we better do next?"

"That is for the police to decide. I merely dig up facts and place them before you," replied McMurdoo.

Trevelyn's face clearly showed his disappointment.

"But have you any more facts?"

"I have some. For instance, Mademoiselle Naga really has seven cobras now, whereas she had but six."

"She said that last night."

"But to-day she showed me the seven. One is different from the others. The same in size and marking, but different in actions——"

"Why not say in manners and be done with it?" Trevelyn's obstinacy was getting the better of his judgment again.

"Excuse me, but did you call up Commissioner Randall?" McMurdoo's tones were icy now.

"Yes." Very humble now, as the detective chief recalled what his superior had said to him about McMurdoo. "Really, I beg pardon. This extraordinary case has given me the jumps."

"Let us forget it——"

"No; let us not——"

"I mean your irritation, not the case." McMurdoo smiled and the storm cloud passed over, to return in part when Trevelyn said:

"We don't any of us know if she had six or seven snakes."

"How foolish! Would not the Customs House books show what she brought in? All such things are listed. When she arrived to begin her American tour she had to give an account of her belongings."

Trevelyn's face plainly showed his disappointment at being second to think of that point.

"But it is not necessary to inquire there, as I have found the further fact that whereas Sims & Sims, dealers in animals, pets, gold fish, reptiles, of upper Fifth avenue, had a King Cobra, sent them, on order, from Malacca, it arriving not long ago, they have not it now, it having been taken, by a messenger, for the person who ordered it a week ago.

"Aha," and Trevelyn sat bolt upright and threw away his half-smoked cigar. "I'll turn a quartet of men loose on that clue at once, have those animal dealers on the carpet and get after the messenger from their description."

McMurdoo laughed.

"You seem to want to run this case yourself. Was that what Randall told you?"

Trevelyn collapsed.

"I'll be good; have a heart for a worried man," he said.

McMurdoo laughed.

"As for the person who really purchased the snake," he went calmly on, "Sims & Sims never saw him. It was all done over the phone and through the messenger."

"Might not the messenger be the one who really purchased the snake?"

"That remains to be seen. I have no theory on this case or any phase of it. I am just gathering facts—as a mental relaxation, after months of close scientific application."

"But have you his description?"

"Yes. He is about five feet five, tall; slight; very black, a negro, with a wavy scar on his chin, running back under his jaw on the left side. And a peculiar mark in the middle of his forehead."

"With that description we ought to be able to locate him easily, if he is in the city."

"Especially with that blue mark on his forehead."

"To what does that refer?"

"That is a matter that may come out later, my dear Trevelyn. There are some facts in this case that I have not spoken of—yet."

The chief of detectives permitted himself a grimace of disappointment, which McMurdoo noted, but did not comment upon. Already his mind seemed intent upon other matters. Presently he got up and went through the lounging-room to the desk, where he inquired if his room, 1313, would be ready for his occupancy that night. He was assured that it would be ready, orders having come from Commissioner Randall expressly, in response to Dold's inquiry, to turn the room over to McMurdoo, if he insisted upon having it.

Then McMurdoo came back to Trevelyn's side, sat down, placed his hat on a table in the alcove that was between them, took off his gloves one by one, depositing them in the hat, balanced his cane on the hat's brim and sank back into the depths of the leather chair with a sigh of satisfaction, puffing steadily at his cigarette.

"One might think you were theorizing on the facts you have collected with regard to this case," Trevelyn ventured acidly.

McMurdoo started as if stung by a serpent.

"Theorizing!" he exclaimed sharply. "Humph! Harrumph!" He emitted a great number of smoke-rings in quick succession from all sides of his mouth.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, with extreme satisfaction. "I have succeeded."

"Succeeded?" cried Trevelyn, half starting up.

"Yes."

"In what? Solving the King Cobra Mystery?"

"No; in blowing one ring through another and a third through the second. I have rarely done as well. When I accomplish that feat it is always a lucky day. Once I did it and before night had made an important discovery in higher toxicology."

Again he leaned back and blew right after ring with the greatest abandon.

Trevelyn, his face blank with astonishment, got up with a gesture of apparent disgust. This habit of McMurdoo's of playing with smoke-rings had affected him adversely when the scientist had called on him in the morning; now the man's cool assumption of playfulness almost maddened him, especially when he thought of what the newspapers would be saying in a few days if the King Cobra Mystery was not solved.

"Just a moment, Trevelyn," said McMurdoo, making a final and futile attempt to duplicate his difficult feat. "I

wish you would have two or three trusty men ready to-night——"

Trevelyn whirled, his eyes alight with eagerness. This sounded like action.

"Have you found anything definite?" he asked eagerly.

"I wish you would have three or four trusty men to-night," went on McMurdoo, as if he had not heard the interruption, "and send them to Room 1435, Hotel Branscome, at just 11.45 o'clock. Have them get master-keys from the hotel management and let themselves into the reception hall and penetrate to the sample room door and wait. The rugs on the floors are thick and the men can go in and through without making any noise, if they are careful."

"Yes."

Trevelyn was all attention now.

"After your men are in position a few moments they will hear a window raised, followed by a peculiar, creaking sound like a clothesline pulley makes. Then let them charge in boldly and very quietly, if possible, capture Samtra Hurribruddha, who has that apartment for his Oriental goods sample room and hold him, at your call, to be brought where I direct later."

"Hurribruddha is well known, and there will be no difficulty about getting him, as you state. Shall we get a warrant for him?"

"By no means. He will make no trouble about a warrant. In fact, I predict he will be glad, on the surface, at least, to be arrested."

Puffing out another succession of rings and then yawning slightly, McMurdoo got up from his comfortable chair and said to the astounded Trevelyn:

"As for me, I must now go to the City Hall and talk with the mayor and a tiresome commission about the arrangements for the interior of the new reptile house at the zoo. If it were not for the fact that I shall there meet and afterward go through the reptile collection with Ditmars, the brainy curator, I should be terribly bored. But with that eminent man to fall back upon, as a reliever, after the commission meeting, the day will end all too soon." He picked up his things and prepared to depart.

He started away, but came back, saying:

"As for you, Trevelyn, come here at 11 o'clock to-night. After seeing Ditmars I intend to spend the early part of the evening at some good vaudeville house, and will return at 11. Your men can phone here of their success or failure at the Branscome, or we can call them, as it turns out."

"Very well, sir."

"And, Trevelyn."

"Yes."

"Have a couple of handfuls of clean, sharp sand in your pocket and your gun. That's all. Oh, yes; have Carlin, the hotel detective, here, too. I rather liked the cool way he handled that foreigner in the hall this morning."

The dumpy figure wheeled and was gone before Trevelyn could recover from his astonishment.

"Two handfuls of sand," he snorted. "If I didn't have Randall's word on this squatty son of a Billiken, I'd go ahead on my own in this case. If I fail, every other head of a Section in the big town will be jabbering at me, and I'll be a scream in the funny columns. Two handfuls of sand!"

Again in his taxi, McMurdoo was whirled to the City Hall, where he had his meeting with the Park Commission and the mayor, from there he went to the reptile house at the zoo, where, with Ditmars, he spent a delightful afternoon going over the collection of rare serpents there, handling them and observing their habits in captivity.

After bidding the eminent herptologist farewell, McMurdoo went to the Glendon, in time to escort Mademoisell Naga to dinner and, after the meal, waited for her while she dressed for the theater. When the snake girl had finished her toilette, one in green and gold, with lace and spangles over all, she threw a large ermine cloak over her shoulders and stood, smiling, radiant, very erect, waiting for McMurdoo, who, seated in a comfortable chair, was making rings roll forth from his mouth like an engine going upgrade, watching meanwhile the smoke circles break against the wicker-work baskets in which her cobras were coiled, ready to be taken to the theater.

"So, my friend," said she, gazing down at him with warm interest, "you behold this poor girl that Captain Trevelyn would have it did so horrible a deed. Shall you escort her to the theater? I have a box ordered for you, as you know."

"By all means. Let us go. You must make your appearance and not falter in your act. At such a time it is essential that you keep up your nerve. Remember that I am gathering facts for you."

She smiled happily at him.

"Come, I'll act as your porter to-night," he said. He seemed to be in rare good humor. Before she could object he had started nimbly up and slipped an arm through the carrying ring of first one snake basket, then of the other. Together they went out into the hall and to the rear elevator, which Mademoiselle Naga used in taking her pets to and from the hotel. At the rear of the hotel they found a taxi in waiting and soon were whisked to the Weyburne Vaudeville Palace, only a few blocks away. After letting Mademoiselle Naga off at the stage entrance, with her pets, McMurdoo went out in front, telling the taxi man to wait.

McMurdoo saw the show and led the applause for Mademoiselle Naga, although on account of the notoriety the King Cobra Mystery had given her, she needed no *claquers* then, the place being crowded almost to suffocation. In the pit McMurdoo saw Hurribruddha.

A fat man, seated next to McMurdoo in the box, and who remarked, as the snake girl same forward for her final blow, "She surely is guilty; the police ought to have arrested her, not permitted her to show here to-night," was astounded when the short man beside him turned about, glared at him and bellowed: "Nonsense, sir; nonsense; all theory; no facts!" And before the fat man could recover his breath or his wits the short man had flung himself out of the box and was on his way to the waiting taxi in front. There he ordered the driver to chug around to the stage entrance again, and when Mademoiselle Naga came out, McMurdoo was at hand to place the two baskets of serpents, which a stage hand had brought out, in the cab.

Her act had been an early one on the program and so they had plenty of time to have a quiet little bite in the Glendon's rathskellar, after the cobras had been put away in her room. And time, too, for McMurdoo to escort her again to her apartment, where they chatted for a quarter of an hour before leaving to keep his appointment with Trevelyn.

All during the evening he had not discussed the mystery with her, avoiding the subjects as something not permitted to mar the pleasure of their evening.

At the door she asked:

"That wild cobra, monsieur. Shall I kill it?"

"No, let's keep it. I may ask you for it to-morrow to add to my own collection at Bathurst. You know I have over one hundred and fifty species of snakes there, mostly deadly——"

"*Mais!* So many?" Her eyes sparkled. Her pretty hands fluttered in a frank gesture of astonishment.

"Yes, and I should like to add this cobra to the lot. Keep him for me—until to-morrow."

"Until many to-morrows, monsieur." This with a bewitching smile.

McMurdoo took a step, an eager step, back toward her, and said:

"But I shall see you before one to-morrow, mademoiselle. Do not retire. Expect a call from me—soon. When it comes, do you come to me at the Allondayle and trust me. Do as I wish there."

"Then you expect some results to-night?"

"That must be seen. I look for the working-out of some

facts I have uncovered. I never indulge in theories, you know."

"At what hour will the call come?"

"Soon."

"Until then, adieu, monsieur." She held out her dainty but well-muscled hand to him and he, with rare, olden courtesy, bowed over it and kissed it warmly.

"*Mais*, monsieur, it is with an air you offer your salutations," and she waved her hand in parting. Already he was on his way down the corridor, puffing smoke-rings from either side of his mouth with the regularity of clock-work, and swinging his cane.

"Decidedly, Marie," she said to her maid, when she was seated in her apartment again, waiting for the call, "that short man is not insignificant—especially in his brains."

PART THREE

PRECISELY at eleven, McMurdoo, puffing a fresh cigarette, came briskly into the lounging-room of the Allondayle, where he found Trevelyn and Dold awaiting him. They at once greeted him eagerly.

"Trevelyn has informed me that you expect developments in the King Cobra Mystery here to-night," Dold began.

"Not developments, Mr. Dold. Perhaps we may run onto some more facts."

"That will be the same thing," girded Trevelyn.

"Pardon me, sir, no. We *discover* facts, and each fact leads the indefatigable worker to other, perhaps related, facts; but theories are *developed*, sir." He blew a double smoke-ring with great precision and then suddenly drew the men into the alcove that was near by. McMurdoo opened the left-hand corner of his vest and displayed the ivory handle of a small revolver that nestled, in a woven silk holster, against his left side, the handle pointing forward.

"You see, I came armed. I warned you, Trevelyn, to be armed, as well."

"My gun is here," said Trevelyn, tapping his right hip-pocket.

"Careless of you to waste a gun there, Trevelyn. While you were reaching for it your enemy, carrying a gun as I carry mine, could shoot you twice or thrice, and if he were me, the first time would be enough. Get a side holster, sir, and learn to carry your pistol as the old-time Texas rangers carry theirs."

"Where did you learn all that?" asked Dold, who was much interested.

"When I have been on collecting trips in the Southwest."

"Do I need a gun?" Dold asked

The prisoners were seated on the bed, which Dold had vacated.

"No; we have you cast for a rôle that will call for nerve, but no gun-play. But we'll see that you are not in peril. In fact, none of us will be, if all goes well. I am having the guns at hand to be ready for the unforeseen. Trevelyn, did you bring the sand?"

"Yes." He was sheepish in his expression. "But when I sent the doorman out after it he cracked a joke about my not having enough natural 'sand.'"

"Let him joke, Trevelyn. You will be glad to have that sand before this is over. Well, here comes Carlin; let us meet him and then go ahead. First, Dold, have some one phone for Mademoiselle Naga, at her hotel, to come to me at 1313."

Carlin joined them, prepared for any emergency.

"Do I need my gun?" he asked, jokingly.

"You do not. What we need of you is the use of that good pair of arms and hands that you used so well on the foreigner in the upper hall this morning," said McMurdoo, "and some more of that cool nerve you displayed when you trapped that cobra under that waste-basket last night."

Carlin blushed with pleasure. Trevelyn earlier in the evening had informed him who and what McMurdoo was and had taken Dold into the secret. Carlin therefore was more than pleased at this warm praise from the famous scientist.

"And, Trevelyn, give Carlin a handful of that sand to carry in his side coat pocket," said McMurdoo.

Carlin backed off at this.

"Gee, ain't I got enough sand o' my own?" he said, half doubting, half smiling.

"You'll need it; take it," said McMurdoo, as Trevelyn proffered the sand.

Without further comment Carlin allowed Trevelyn to sift the sand into his side coat pocket.

"Now, gentlemen, let's go up." They entered the elevator.

On the thirteenth floor they found Jane Murray again at her desk in the alcove in the main corridor. She had been warned by Dold to expect them. Carlin found time to whisper a few words to her and to give her hand a little squeeze under the corner of the desk. Everything was quiet up there, in one of those odd lulls that come in all human affairs, whether in factories, political conventions, households or hotels.

"Jane," Dold said, "pray attend to what Mr. McMurdoo wishes and obey him for the evening."

"Miss Murray," said McMurdoo, "give me the key to 1313 and also tell me if the small, hard pillow that Mr.

Weyburne used to rest his left shoulder on to ease up his attacks of heart trouble is available?"

"Yes; I had Tonio, the supply room man, take it to the supply room, No. 1314, and told him to have it renovated before being put into use again."

The elevator stopped and Mademoiselle Naga stepped out, attired as she had been on the stage. She glanced inquiringly at McMurdoo, who hastily presented her to the others and then drew her to the door of No. 1313, saying:

"We shall be out in a moment. Remain in the alcove and let any one who passes perceive nothing unusual."

Then, throwing open the door of 1313, he said to Mademoiselle Naga:

"Enter, mademoiselle."

With a simple gesture of thrust in him she entered the room. McMurdoo closed the door. The room was in good order, the bed neatly made, the curtains up, all as if nothing unusual had happened there but twenty hours before.

"Mademoiselle," McMurdoo began, lowly, "I am about to ask of you a strange thing. It is necessary for me, at this stage of my investigations, to impress a third party with the idea that you love me——"

She started back, her cheeks bright with blushes.

"Believe me, I would not deign thus to speak, but for the fact that we must have more facts——"

His voice died away in an ineffectual whisper.

Her voice, low and faltering, came to him as in a dream:

"If it is necessary, monsieur, proceed."

He came to her and placed his arms about her, drew her to him and while he felt her shoulders heave with emotion, kissed her passionately on the cheeks, the lips, the brow.

"Ah, monsieur," she whispered, "who sees cannot doubt that in love-making you are a good actor. I return the kisses as you give them, but am not able to make them warm as yours."

He did not answer, but pressed her still closer to her and then, suddenly dropping his arms, pushed her back and ran to the window curtains. He drew them down and turned to her with a smile on his face.

"The little comedy is over," he said, "much to my regret."

Again the blushes came to her cheeks and her eyes sparkled as she said, with a pretty air of trust in him:

"And to mine, also, monsieur. At love-making you are not—insignificant."

"Come," and he swung open the door.

"Mademoiselle Naga," he ordered, "go to the alcove at the desk and remain—out of the line of vision of any one coming up or down the corridor. Miss Murray, is Tonio, who runs the supply room, on duty now?"

"Not regularly at this hour," she replied. "But I sometimes call him for special services at any hour, as his work in the supply room is not laborious, only requiring care and diligence."

"Trevelyn, you and Dold go into some room and wait, and you, Miss Murray, call this Tonio. Tell him to get the hard pillow and bring it into my room and adjust it for me, as I have the asthma. When he comes, Miss Murray, from my room, be absent from your desk. But come out again when he has gone back up the hall."

McMurdoo went into 1313 and shut the door. He put up the curtains again and began to make methodical preparations, as if for retiring, having turned the lights all on. He found his grip in the wardrobe and brought it out, spreading his pajamas over the bed on the side toward the windows. Then he went to the switch and threw off all the light but one and continued to make ready for bed by its dim light. A man was visible in one of the windows across the court from 1313, one story above.

The hall door opened and a negro came in. McMurdoo, his eyes now accustomed to the dimmer light, could see that the servant had hair that was straight and black, not kinky. His eyes had very prominent whites and they rolled about in their sockets in the half-light in a rather alarming manner. He was clothed in the buff uniform of the Hotel Allondayle's male servants of the minor ranks —hallboys, bell-hops, porters, etc. His face was not displeasing as he turned to McMurdoo with a smile, although there was a hint about his mouth as of forced good humor —such as a menial might evince in lively expectation of tips about to be received as a recompense for an extra service out of usual hours. An odd shadow seemed in dim light to rest between the man's brows slightly over their center and from the left side of his chin, back under his jaw, ran a scar that was limned against his flesh in a wavy line.

"You are Tonio?" asked McMurdoo. His voice had in it an odd, wheezy rasp.

"Yas, sar, yas, sar," and the black lips grinned, the white teeth shone.

"Tonio, I want to use that pillow that Mr. Weyburne had. I have an asthma and it eases me if I can have a pillow under my shoulder. I'm told you sometimes fixed the pillow for Mr. Weyburne. I'm sorry you had to be disturbed, but you had the key to the supply room, so we had to rouse you out. Here's something for your pain," and he produced a coin, which the black man pouched dexterously. He had advanced to McMurdoo's side to take the coin. The scientist now wheezed steadily, harshly.

"It's going to be a hard attack to-night, Tonio," he said, "and seeing you are here, I want to see if that pillow fits me, so if it doesn't I can send you for another. To make sure, I'll lie down and you can put the pillow back of my shoulder. I suppose that's how poor Weyburne had it done?"

"Yas, sar, dat's it, sar, indeed, sar."

McMurdoo, soon ready for bed, slipped between the sheets, wheezing more and more and groaning at times. He laid down, with his left shoulder to the mattress, his left arm trailing over the bed's edge along the wall at the head of the bed, wrist turned backward so that the palm of the hand was very close to the wall. His right arm extended along his right side.

All during his getting into position, McMurdoo wheezed and groaned, more and more.

"Tuck the pillow in tightly, Tonio," he said, groaning again, "and then turn out the light as you go out."

Tonio jammed the pillow under McMurdoo's shoulder as a prop and went out, after throwing off the lights. As he closed the door McMurdoo gave a very loud groan and seemed to strangle in the very effort to get breath.

But no sooner had Tonio gone than the scientist jumped out of bed and placed his ear to the partition at the bed's head. He heard Tonio moving about and at times McMurdoo wheezed, even then, to keep up the illusion he had sought to create in the black's mind. Tonio spent a moment or two more in the supply room and then his movements there ceased. McMurdoo then leaped back into bed again, and when a knock came at his door was wheezing and moaning again, the pillow under his shoulder once more.

"Come in," he said, as if he were having great difficulty to speak even above a whisper.

The door hinges creaked and the lights flashed on. The black had found the switch.

"Did you call Tonio, sar?" he asked.

"No, I thank you, I didn't, Tonio."

"I was a-passin' an' thought I heard you, sar."

"No; you must have heard me groan; my asthma is bad to-night, Tonio; good-night," said McMurdoo kindly.

"Good-night," and the black went out, eyes rolling back.

"Good boy!"

McMurdoo waited for Tonio to make his way up the corridor and then leaped out of bed with the agility of a cat and slipped on his trousers and shoes, leaving his pajamas underneath, thus being ready to appear in the corridor outside in a moment.

Racing along, not meeting any other guests, for that floor seemed quiet for the night now, McMurdoo went to Jane Murray, whom he found staring, open-eyed, at him from her alcove, with Mademoiselle Naga. She called Dold, Trevelyn and Carlin out of their hiding-places near by, and then McMurdoo asked her:

"Did Tonio go down the corridor, as if to his own place?"

"At least he went to the servants' elevator in the rear," she said.

"Good; I like an answer like that, telling what you saw, not theorizing on it, Miss Murray. Now get on your phone and ask the hotel's central if she hasn't had a call to connect the servants' quarters with Room 1435, Hotel Branscome, within a few moments?"

With intense anxiety they waited and soon Jane nodded in the affirmative.

"I thought so," said McMurdoo. "Now, that black will be back here very soon, and I want the scene set for him. We must work in a hurry, all of us. You, Miss Murray, absent yourself from your desk, so when he comes back he will feel that the coast is clear. Take Mademoiselle Naga with you. Tonio still has his key to 1313, hasn't he?"

"Yes; he keeps it all the time. He is responsible for the room and its contents. I have a master-key and can get in if some simple thing is needed there in the night."

"How long have you had Tonio, Dold?"

"Several months. Never had any complaints against him."

Miss Murray unlocked 1313 for him. Then she and Mademoiselle Naga disappeared.

"Carlin and Trevelyn, you wait here. Dold, come with me," McMurdoo ordered.

He took Dold inside 1313 and said: "Now, old man, lie on the bed there, with your left arm hanging over, so," showing him. "You are to groan and wheeze, as one who has asthma." Here he gave an imitation for Dold. The hotel man, in spite of his guest's earnestness, began to snicker, but he checked himself at a word of command. McMurdoo, thoroughly in earnest, lectured him:

"No time to explain now, but you'll be helping to solve the mystery. I hope that we may clear it all up and end the long official inquiries that so often embarrass a hotel in cases like this. If you don't care to play the rôle I assign you, I'll give it to Carlin, and——"

"No, I'll do as ordered." Dold was humble and pliant now.

Soon McMurdoo had him in proper position.

"No matter what happens," he ordered, "do not draw your hand and wrist away from the position in which I place it."

Dold shuddered.

"Is there any danger that the same thing will happen to my wrist that happened to Weyburne's?" he faltered.

"Not the slightest. Leave it all to me—or rather to Carlin and Trevelyn, who are booked for the heavy heroic rôles. I am handling the brain end of the show. You will feel something after a while touch you on the wrist and feel a noose draw your wrist against the wall. *Do not resist. Trust in me.*"

With that comfort he left the big hotel man on the bed and went out, in silence.

The door of 1314 was ajar. He shepherded Carlin and Trevelyn inside.

"You know where the switch is in here," he said. "Carlin, turn the lights on. There being no transom, the lights will not show from the hall."

Carlin flooded the supply room with light. It was a narrow den, a mere alleyway, one of those spaces that architects purloin from the rooms on either side to make places for supplies—towels, linens, table napery, soaps, talcums, etc., in the big hotels and apartment houses. A shelf near the window opening on the court afforded the supply men a place on which to sort their materials over and classify them. A long row of shelving ran the length of the place, almost, from corridor wall to outer wall. Where the shelving ended, near the door, was a space given up to brooms, hung on pegs up near the ceiling, dust mops, and the like.

"In here," said McMurdoo, hustling the other two back of the curtain that closed in the space for the brooms and mops. He pressed back with them, after snapping out the lights. From where he was he reached out through the curtain and snapped the door shut, the springlock making it fast without necessity for using the key.

The three men were close together in the dark. From the other side of the partition, in 1313, came the sounds of Dold's wheezes.

"'Smatter with the boss?" asked Carlin, uneasily.

"Hush; he's playing a part in our little comedy," whispered McMurdoo. "Your part is simply this: Tonio will come in and we are to watch. When I say 'Jump' we must all three act and capture what is in front of us, if it's a lion. You men spit on your hands and get them sanded. Remember, we catch what's in front of us, if it's a lion."

"Or a cobra!" whispered Trevelyn. His knees were knocking together. Just a wee bit.

"No matter; he's here!"

So he was.

The key grated.

The three waited, almost breathless, back of the thin curtain. They felt the cloth move as a man passed it, so close that the air he stirred in passing caused the curtain to sway. After he passed toward the far end of the narrow room the man was silent for a moment. They heard Dold groan and wheeze; then the man's footsteps as he padded back toward them in the dark, muttering: "Hit's all right; he's a sick man."

At the door he snapped on the lights.

The hotel uniform was off Tonio, lying on the floor near the shelf at the room's rear wall. He stood erect—a savage in a breechclout! Through a crack in the curtain they watched.

Without hesitation Tonio went back to the rear shelf and leaned across it and pushed up the window cautiously. The trio saw him reach under a pile of sheets on a nearby shelf and take from under it a lightly made bow and arrow.

Trevelyn started in astonishment. But at a warning pressure from McMurdoo's thumbs in his ribs, he restrained himself.

The black strung the bow and weighed the arrow carefully in his delicately formed hand. Then he drew from some little recess a spool of fine silk thread and unwound it, piling the thread up on the window ledge in a neat way, as a fisherman does a handline before making a throw. Then he knotted the end of the thread to the arrow and glanced out over the open court beyond the window space. Drawing the arrow to the head, he took careful aim.

"Twang!"

Tonio stood erect, for a moment, as a hunter might when observing the effect of a shot upon which much depended. Then they heard him grunt with satisfaction and he laid the bow down. He began to draw in the thread that the arrow had taken out over the court, his motions being as one who hauls in a fishline, hand over hand. The little pile of silk on the window-sill grew and grew. Then he began to draw in a stronger, white thread, then a cord—and then a rope.

The trio saw the black snub the rope's end about a fixture on the wall and set himself to hold against the rope's slipping. Then the end of the rope that they could see inside the window casing began to vibrate and the window space darkened and then another black, huge, menacing in breechclout, came over the sill and stood beside Tonio!

The newcomer growled something and McMurdoo, bending over until his mouth was at the level of the ears of his two companions, said:

"It is Hurribruddha's servant. He speaks in Kling. He asks if all goes well."

They heard Tonio answer in a low whisper.

Dold wheezed and moaned in 1313.

"He is explaining that Dold (he thinks it's me) sleeps in the same position as Weyburne always occupied," breathed McMurdoo. "They plan to poison him, as Weyburne was poisoned last night. Not a sound, only when I say 'Jump, do it."

After further whispering the two blacks left the window and came down the narrow space until they were

half-way between the court wall and corridor. A small radiator was there. The trio saw the twain bend down together and so caught their first good view of the second man's countenance. McMurdoo himself shuddered at the concentration of evil passions he saw thereon. The turban had concealed from him when in Hurribruddha's place the seams from many scars on the big black's cheek tops and forehead and now, too, in the full light he saw in the center of his brow the same dread mark that was on Tonio's forehead. His eyes, like Tonio's, rolled, and in the excitement his lips were curled back from his white, even teeth in a half-snarl. His dark, straight black hair was held back with a wooden comb, almost like a woman's barette.

From his supplies Tonio produced a wrench, which the two adjusted to the steam pipe that entered the wall just there. It was plain to the watchers that the pair meant to twist out the service pipe between the two radiators, that in 1813 and that in 1314, and thus they would have a hole, about three inches in diameter, ready made.

"Dold's wrist is opposite that hole," just breathed McMurdoo to his assistants, as the short pipe length came away at the last turn of the wrench.

They saw Tonio stoop way down and run his slender hand into the hole. Then he muttered something to the other savage.

"He reports he can feel Dold's wrist," breathed McMurdoo. "I hope Dold keeps his nerve. Be ready. Grip your sand. All set!"

At his sibilant warning the muscles of the two manhunters grew tense in anticipation of the final crashing impact of opposing bodies.

The larger black muttered something to Tonio, who got up and went to where some bottles were on the end of the sorting shelf. He took one up and came back, with the bottle and something small and black in his hand. The two bent over and began to work over something lying between them on the floor.

Dold wheezed and groaned again.

"The big black man is for you, Carlin, the other one for Trevelyn. Kill, if you have to. I must get that bottle and something else." That was McMurdoo's final whispered order.

"All set," from Trevelyn.

"Same," from Carlin.

"Jump!"

There was the flash of three human bodies in motion. A tangle of limbs. With a single blow Trevelyn felled his man. McMurdoo grasped the bottle and the other object the two poisoners had been using, ere they could be destroyed. Carlin, less fortunate, grabbed the big black by the arms and tried to put the police tow-twist on him, but the oiled skin of the savage slipped through his fingers —those of the right hand. The left-hand fingers, sanded, held, and the savage, twisting slowly from right to left, rolled and wriggled. So narrow was the space that the others could not help him, and the end came so quickly that they did not have time, for while the savage belched forth strings of expletives in half a dozen Spice Island dialects, the hotel detective was twisting his left arm until it almost came out of his socket. The two emerged from under the sorting shelf with a heave, Carlin's gun in the black's ribs, the black's right hand on the detective's throat. But he collapsed when he felt the full pressure of the gun against his middle. Evidently he had had some experience with such weapons.

A second later two pairs of handcuffs snapped and the blacks were prisoners. To make them doubly secure McMurdoo had their feet bound with ropes taken from the supplies, leaving them so their feet could be shuffled at a slow walk only.

"Bring them out," he said, leading the way. Under his arm he had the bottle and the other object he had taken in the mêlée he had in his vest pocket. Travelyn brought bow, arrow, wrench.

Outside they found Jane Murray and she stared wildly when she saw the two savages in the Hotel Allondayle and almost screamed when she saw that one of them was Tonio.

"Into 1313," said McMurdoo.

Entering, they found Dold in bed, still groaning.

"Time to recover, Dold," said McMurdoo, snapping on the lights. Mademoiselle Naga, called by Miss Murray, entered with her.

Dold sat up and rubbed his eyes in mock sleepiness. Then he opened them wide at seeing the two clouted savages in his modern hotel, handcuffed prisoners. Dold piled out and displayed a neat noose of strong, small rope about his left wrist.

"I thought so," said McMurdoo.

"I grated my nerves to feel a hand come out of a wall and seize my wrist and noose it like that. What happened then? It sounded like a cyclone under compression."

"You'll hear the details soon enough," said McMurdoo. "Trevelyn, phone to your men at the Branscome and order them to bring their prisoner here. Have them come up the back way, to get away from the newspaper men. Let's get some extra chairs in here and make ourselves comfortable."

The phone call made, the prisoners were seated on the bed, which Dold had vacated, he not having undressed to play his deceptive part in the drama. McMurdoo placed on the floor the bottle he had seized from the two savages.

Soon in came Bolton and Grayson, Trevelyn's trusted men, with a couple of plain-clothes men, having in charge Samtra Hurribruddha, much rumpled as to his clothing, his fat brown face oily with sweat recently mopped away, his shoulders sagging from the lassitude that overcomes the physically unfit after too much exertion.

As soon as he was forced into the room, Hurribruddha saw two clouted savages on the bed and his face became gray with fear. His limbs trembled, his eyes rolled in a frenzy of terror.

"Protect me from a beeg black man," he wailed, shrinking back as the larger of the two captives on the bed glowered at him with evil eyes. "Do that and I weel make confeeshion."

He was given a seat a bit apart from the other two prisoners.

At first it seemed as if the big black was about to throw himself upon the shivering Kling merchant, but he soon restrained himself and remained, passive, dejected, as one who is resigned to his fate.

McMurdoo, a cigarette alight, blew ring after ring in evident enjoyment. All waited for the further development of this extraordinary case.

"Mademoiselle Naga," said McMurdoo, "if you will please take a seat in the center of the room, beside the table, and if Bolton will produce his pen and notebook, to take down any statement you may make, as well as others that may be made, I shall be obliged."

The beautiful woman emerged from behind Jane Murray, whose ample form had been before that in line between her and the two clouted savages and started toward the chair indicated. As she did so there was a loud hiss, like that of a serpent. It came from the lips of the big black, whose face was convulsed with rage.

Like a flash she turned and faced him, majestic in her anger.

"I will not be silent, Cheraker," she said firmly. "I cannot obey your signal for silence."

"Never mind him," said McMurdoo, "just tell us what you know. Carlin, keep your gun ready for action. If he stirs, shoot to kill."

McMurdoo smiled encouragingly at the show girl, as she began:

MADEMOISELLE NAGA'S STORY

"My name is Mademoiselle Hortense LeBouf.

"As I sit here and confront these captives, messieurs, and especially the big black man, my mind goes back—far, far over the years, to when I was a little girl, playing in a garden that was enclosed in bamboo palisades.

Overhead was the brilliant sun of the tropics, its warmth tempered by the sea breeze from the Strait of Malacca. Near me, on a stone bench, was a woman, in the habit of a nun. She watched me as I played and after a time called me to her and toyed with my curls. I was dressed in a little pink dress and had on pink slippers. The nun held me close to her for a time and talked to me of the sparkling sea, the soaring sun, the clouds drifting across the blue of the sky, of the butterflies—and then of myself.

"Sister Innocenzia of the Order of Mercy was only one of the many Sisters who had cared for me in the orphanage in the suburbs of Malacca, but she was the kindest of all, so it seemed to me, because she seemed especially interested in me. What some do through duty may be well done, but one touch of kindness, of sympathy, makes it doubly dear. Even so the kindly interest of this so kind McMurdoo these past few trying hours has made its impress upon my heart—the impress of gratitude.

"But to return: Sister Innocenzia talked finally of me, telling me that as I had grown up to the age of twelve and would in due time complete my studies, I should know of my condition and prospects. I paraphrase her story thus:

"I was the daughter of a French coffee planter of Sumatra and of a Batta woman whom he had married while on a trip into the interior of the island to look after some new coffee land. Of course marriages between whites and natives bring to the whites a certain loss of caste, but such did not bother my father and mother, as the match was a true-love match and he had long before cut all connections with France and made a fortune in the East in coffee. He liked the country, so determined to wed there and to remain there. The Battas have no temples, no priests. My mother was a Batta princess.

"Their plantation was at a distance from all sources of aid when an insurrection broke out among the natives among the farther hills. This outbreak came suddenly, arriving over some petty fiction between the native races; but before it was over our plantation was ruined, scourged, and all the buildings burned and the improvements spoiled. My mother and father were slain.

"A few days later a band of fakirs passing that way found me alive, crying amidst the ruins of an outbuilding where the dead body of my native nurse had been found. These fakirs, snake charmers, took me off with them. I was then one year old.

"A few months later a detachment of native police, raiding a ruined temple on the outskirts of Pelembang, with arms broke up some sort of mystic orgy, of which I was the center, and dispersed the fakirs, rescuing me from them.

"I was sent across the straits to Malacca to the Sisters of Mercy and placed in their care. When I arrived I was clad in rich baby robes of the finest silks, sown with seed pearls and on my forehead was a queer mark, made with some dye, that did not disappear for months. This mark resembled an eye. It was the mark of the Third Eye of Siva, Sister Innocenzia told me, and it marked me as one dedicated to the services of snake worship by the fakirs.

"Underneath, as I can tell you, messieurs, vast numbers of the humbler folk of the Far East are devotees of Dread Bahriva, or Siva, the Snake Goddess, the Destroyer of the Brahmin Trilogy.

"Sister Innocenzia went on to tell me that from a small child I had been fond of being out of doors and alone, fond of chasing up and down garden paths and of street sounds, and that especially when I was taken to those places in the city where the fakirs held forth in the markets or on the streets, I was strangely affected. On two or three occasions they had found me in the garden, alone, at play with some serpent that had invaded it and once when a gardener slew a cobra that I had tamed and came to every day at its hole in the basement of an outbuilding, I went off into a storm of weeping.

"Because I was so fascinated with such matters, Sister Innocenzia said, it had been decided that I had no vocation for the career of a nun, and from that time on I must look forward to being educated strictly with a view to taking a place outside in the world.

"The remnants of my father's estate and the money from the seed pearls on the dress in which I was dressed when saved from the fakirs had provided a fund sufficient to pay for my education and care until I should be of age.

"I cannot express to you, messieurs, the effect her story had upon me, a girl who up to then had scarcely known a care. But after sobbing on her placid bosom for a few moments, I became calmer and she left me alone, bidding me to compose myself before entering the house. So she left me, with a kiss—forever.

"How long I remained thus I do not know, but at least long enough to become calm again and to throw off, with the elastic spirits of youth, the feeling of depression that had fallen upon me. Suddenly I became aware of the measured cadence of shrill music outside the bamboo palisades of our garden and, as it rose and fell, I caught the lilt of the snake song—the snake dance song—that the fakirs blow on their pipes when they cause the cobras to perform.

"This music, falling on my ears so soon after they had taken in the Sister's story about my earlier years, had a strange, compelling effect upon me, and I desired to see what manner of men these were that made their living in such a fashion. I crept to the palisades and through the openings between the bamboos saw two very aged fakirs, seated on the ground before two great woven fiber baskets. The lids of the baskets were off, the pipes were being blown vigorously by the two ancient fakirs. From the baskets were upreared the hoods of several cobras, which swayed as the fakirs swayed their bodies, back and forth, forward or sidewise.

"Fascinated, I squeezed my slight body through the fencing and came out onto the roadside.

"The two old men continued their music, the snakes to sway.

"I felt myself swaying to the rhythm of the snake dance, slightly at first, then more and more, until the sibilant overtones of the pipes' music had penetrated my very being and I longed *only to dance, to dance, to dance*——

"Ah, messieurs, when I to myself came, I was in a great vaulted place, underground, as I could tell by the musty smells, the dampness. It was lighted up with torches—many torches—made of the wood of the oil tree, *thy-tsi*.

"I was between the two aged fakirs. Each had his basket. We three were before a raised divan of stonework, where, upon many, many a tiger and leopard skin, an old, old woman reclined.

"As we came nearer still, in response to a gesture from her, she tottered upright and I saw with horror that her clothing—a single robe—was of the softly tanned skin of some great serpent. Now I know it was that of a python. This garment, so shimmered and scintillated as its glowing scales, in mottled patterns of greens, yellows and blacks, caught the flickering light of the torches, that it was over iridated with an awful, majestic quality that set the wearer of it, crone as she was, oddly apart, as if clad in a robe of enchantment. She placed a wither claw on my forehead and muttered something. One of the fakirs gave her a bit of coloring matter and she marked my forehead—as hers was marked, as I could tell by the pressure of the pointed dye stick she used—with the mark of the Eye. Then she bent and her with red lips, like a touch of death, pressed themselves to my forehead on the Mark of the Eye and she smiled at me and, strange to say, messieurs here present, over her face then there came a radiance that took from my heart its fear. Then she pushed me back.

"Up went one withered arm from the ancient woman's side, and as that yellowed, wrinkled member flashed erect she uttered a word of command and back of us, row upon row, hundreds of forms sprang out of the gloom that even the intense light from the dripping oil-wood flambeaux could not altogether dispel. Each of the shapes so evoked from the shades and silence had his woven basket, each his pipe. Old, young, middle-aged—they were the snake

charmers, the most subtle of the fakirs of the Far East, those of the Malay Archipelago, Peninsula and tinier island groups, each one there representing his own band at their great conclave, held every ten years, as I was to learn. They were out of all tribes.

"At another command from the old woman a pathway was made through the throng and a very tall, a very thick man, a very black man, of determined mein, came through the opened space. He leaped up onto the raised divan of stonework beside the ancient one.

"Again the old woman gave a command, and running through the opened lane there came a woman, clad in scarlet silk robes. She leaped up beside the man. They clasped hands.

"A terrific chant was struck up by the snake men. The woman faced us and I could see that she was beautiful—with the strange, wild beauty of Hindu women in their years of young womanhood.

"The wild chant went on and on, reaching a climax of compelling power. The ancient crone made the man and the woman join hands and they began to dance, at first to the music of the chant; then, on another signal from the eldritch, every snake man brought out his pipes and squatted, took the lid from his woven basket and evoked from its depths the writhing shapes by the use of their accustomed gestures.

"The music rose to a climax of frenzy and then ceased.

"At a single handclap the old woman silenced the last driblets of noise from the throng. The Hindu girl and the big black man unclasped their hands. The baskets were lidded, the weaving cobras inside again; the pipes were silent.

"One of the old fakirs who had me in charge whispered that the two dancers had been married, according to the rites of Siva, and that the old woman, long ruler of their peculiar fraternity, which covers the Far East with its network of secret occultism, was about to retire. The Hindu girl had been selected long ago as the old crone's successor, trained for the place, and now that her successor might be in readiness in due time to act as queen, I was to take the Hindu girl's place, as next in line, coming from the blood of the Battu royal line on my mother's side, and having been adopted into the snake clan as a babe, when I was rescued from the ruins of my mother's house, after it had been looted by the revolting natives. Then I had been taken to this very place for that purpose, but the ceremony had been broken up by the native police, as Sister Innocenzia had told me.

"I do not know how to account for what followed, except that I was under a spell, but I agreed, was raised to the stone platform, hailed as Second Siva to the now reigning queen with a single shout of acclamation and then the two old fakirs lifted me up so all could see me, and for a single instant I felt the fixed gaze on me of those hundreds of fierce, wild men, as if they were imprinting on their memory forever the picture of my countenance. Then I was set down again—and the ceremony was over.

"With the two old fakirs I slept there that night.

"What became of the old Pythoness, I know not. But in the morning all were gone from the gloomy underground vaults of the ruined temple in which we were, save I, the two old fakirs, the Hindu woman, the great black man. The Hindu woman had on the snake robe the old Pythoness had worn. The black man was clad in the simple robes of a fakir, but twined through and through the brown wool of the cloth was the blue semblance of a hooded cobra, woven into the cloth. That, the older of my two friends whispered to me, was the insignia of his leadership, as the robe was that of the woman's, worn in secret.

"The two old men gave me to the Hindu woman and her mate with these instructions, in English, evidently so given that I might understand my duties and my rights, the bride and groom understanding them as well:

"'Consider the girl, who some day will be our queen! She must be pure, not subject to man, before being elevated to the place of supreme power. Heed this rule. Lift not your own eyes to her in desire, nor let no other man do it with your consent.'

"Then to the huge black groom, especially, they said: 'You know all things that we can teach you. You have traveled to all countries, including even the New World, where you went as a performer to one of their great fairs, but more to gain knowledge, we holding that it is best for the supreme head of our dread company to be well informed in all things, near by and foreign. Especially so, now that the white peoples gain so in power and threaten to suppress our fraternity altogether.

"'When you, Hakron Cheraker, and your wife, Lal Ghæsel, our queen, are ready to retire, if this girl lives, then she in her turn shall be provided with a mate and set over the snake clans of the whole world. And be not deceived. The power that raised you up to be the visible symbol of our hidden, awful influence in the affairs of the wide, wide world, can easily destroy, as it has favored you.

"'The eyes of the Many are upon you. We two see for them!

"'Farewell!'

"The two old fakirs vanished. I never saw them again.

"And now followed for me a period of long wanderings. Hakron Cheraker and Lal Ghæsel went forth from the ruins where the snake clans had held their conclave, taking me with them. Before going they stained my body brown and kept it so stained. My hair they made ragged and matted with unguents that dried soon; on my form they placed a small brown robe. Sandals were thonged to my feet and with a deeper dye they made on my forehead the mark of the Third Eye of Siva.

"So disguised I was unreconizable to Europeans and disappeared in the billows of seething native life like as a pebble cast from a tall cliff into the sea's boiling marge.

"Of all our wanderings and haps and mishaps, from the ruined temple vaults of Pelembang, through Sumatra, across the Straits of Malacca, up through Perak, Selangor, Cochin China, Siam, Shan Land, Burmah, the Malabar Coast, India, south and north; Thibet, back down through past Tengri Nor where the great Salween River is born beneath a glacier, along its springs to its fuller courses, through Kalgai Gorge and so on to the Gulf of Martaban, back through the Malaysian coastal fringe and on to Borneo, to Celebes, to Amboyna, to the Ké Islets, to Bournu and back I do not speak to you.

"During all these wanderings, living out of doors mostly, eating simple food, I grew up, strong and well. On the whole Lal Ghæsel was good to me, even when it became apparent that my development had caused Hakron Cheraker, who meanwhile had grown cold and brutal to Lal Ghæsal, to desire me.

"Matters reached a crisis one night after we had returned to the ruined temple at Pelembang for the great conclave, it being due again. There Hakron Cheraker's attention to me became open and little less than dominating, and in the midst of the ceremonies the twin old guardians of the rites—the two old fakirs, still alive and watchful for my safety and that of the fraternity—denounced him to his face. He shrunk from their flashing glances and bowed his head in submission to the cries of the Many that he cease.

"But that night, when the Many had gone, he renewed his advances and, with a tool of his own choosing from the ranks, sought to abduct me. It was Lal Ghæsel who, with her kris, laid open the neck of the tool, from chin to jaw bone's end, and when Hakron Cheraker lay insensible from the effects of a fall he sustained trying to catch me in a wild chase through the ruins, Lal Ghæsel took me in secrecy down to the seashore, where a small native ship was to cross to Malacca at dawn.

"I was now strong, well grown and easily passed in the crowd as a boy. Lal Ghæsel made known to me the place whence I had been kidnaped and bade me apply to the Sisters of Mercy for protection.

"In Malacca I made suitable inquiries, but found that that out-station of the Sisters had been closed, through some change in administrative policy of their order and I

wandered about, without food or money for several days, too proud to appeal to the whites, too much afraid to cast in my lot with the natives.

"In this condition I was impelled to make myself known, through extreme hunger, to an old man and his wife, Chinese, who kept a place of amusement on the outskirts of the town. To them I told my story. If they would shelter me, clothe me as a woman, I engaged with Ah Fong and his wife to take part in their show, which consisted of acrobatic acts, knife-throwing, juggling and the rendering of those long dramas of which the Chinese are so fond. Ah Fong procured for me a pair of small cobras, which I soon trained.

"In short, I achieved success—great success—and so brought prosperity to Ah Fong, with whom I remained a year, adding to my act all those subtle touches of refinement that I had learned from the chiefs of the snake tribes.

"'Let the half-white girl go,' ran the advice of the old men; 'we can raise up a new Second Siva, of pure native blood. Always her white blood will call her away to her own people.'

"From Ah Fong's place I went higher and higher, to open air theaters and garden shows, then came the opportunities to tour the islands and nearby countries in Asia. I found time to renew my studies in French and English and kept up my touch with native life.

"My fame spread and came to the notice of one of Mr. Weyburne's agents, who had his chief write me an offer. I refused to close with him for an American and European tour.

"A second offer from Mr. Weyburne I declined, as well. He came to Malacca on his tour of the East after stage novelties and then, after he had remained in Malacca for a few weeks and had become a familiar figure about the city, I accepted his offer, for a large weekly payment, to exhibit, not only on his circuit, but also for an extended tour, under his management, throughout the whole Occident.

"My relations with Mr. Weyburne were very pleasant. I came to America on the same steamer with him. His maiden sister was with him on the tour and our trip was very pleasant.

"In Malacca Mr. Weyburne's attentions to me were very pleasant and marked. He was kind to me on the trip to New York and afterwards. I declined his offer of marriage in Malacca and was the more convinced that I had acted wisely for him then, because a few days after I found a bit of rice paper in my room, marked simply with the Third Eye. I knew what it meant. Hakron Cheraker watched in the background. Perhaps that was one thing that decided me to go away from Malacca. While Hakron lived I would only imperil a man I openly loved.

"In New York Mr. Weyburne continued to pay me attentions. They were pleasant to me, who had had so many show aversion to me on account of my strange profession, messieurs. But I did not encourage him, pointing out the danger of our union, if one should be celebrated, the disparity of our ages and the social gulf between us. I was kind to him, but felt no love for him to help me over the barriers that separated us. Had there been affection—who can tell what barriers a woman will leap to be wedded to the man of her dreams?

"At last Mr. Weyburne, expressing grave disappointment, yielded to my views and gave up his suit. He continued kind to me, visiting my dressing-room, calling at my hotel, urging me to see him when there was anything he could do for me. My visit to him last night—fatal night—was to have my contract amended in my favor—at his suggestion. Here is the contract he amended.

"Three weeks ago I received word that the snake people of the Far East had been dispersed by the combined action of the secret services of all the countries out there for seeking to set up again, through their secret rites, at this time of world turmoil, their ancient power. The emissary who sent this word to me made it known that I was asked to return—to assume the queenship, Lal Ghæsel being no more.

"How did this word come, meisseurs?

"How do the swallows know their paths north and south or the stars their courses? It came——

"The little black man sitting there on the bed, your captive, is that tool whose jaw was slit with the waved, edge kris in the hands of Lal Ghæsel in saving me from the advances of her mate. And the big black man, messieurs, is Hakron Cheraker. I did not know they were on this side of the world.

"I have finished.'

DETECTIVE GRAYSON'S STORY

"Me and Bolton, here, that's taking this down, gets orders at 9 to be at the Branscome at 11.45 and go to No. 1435 there, go in quietly with the two plain bulls to help and nab the gink that's keeping the Chink goods store up there. We edge in on time and wait for the window to go up and till we hear a funny, creaking noise. We hears it, rush, cover the man we see pulling himself back into the window and nail him and stick him up. He makes no fight. As we put the nippers on him, we go to the window and see from it a rope strung to the window of the Allondayle across the court and on the rope a man is sliding to the Allondayle, the rope slanting downhill one story between buildings. We see the man hit the wall on the other side, grab the window-sill and go in. We wait and get the sign from the captain to come here."

SAMTRA HURRIBRUDHA'S STORY
(Englished from Bolton's notes)

"Like the Mademoiselle Naga, I, too, am of Malacca. I am a Kling of pure blood. Having good knowledge of English and some funds, I came to New York ten years ago. In Malacca I had bought and sold at high profits much costly goods stolen by traveling fakirs of the snake tribe. There I first knew Hakron Cheraker.

"In New York I set up as a dealer in Oriental merchandise in a small way, for this city. It would have been large in Malacca. I prospered and in time found it best to move to a hotel and finally went to the Branscome, whose rear rooms face the open court on which this hotel faces and whose front is two blocks nearer the waterfront than the street on which this hotel is.

"Three months ago appeared to me Hakron Cheraker, with rare silk embroideries from India and Ceylon. He represented himself as rich, able to put in new capital and asked to become my partner. I demurred and he insisted. Finally I consented that he be a silent partner, and he would even act as my usher, in order to take part in the affairs of the business. I feared him, especially because he had power to bring up charges against me on account of our shady deals in Malacca.

"Finally he made known to me his intention to be revenged upon Mademoiselle Naga for refusing to return to the snake people. He asked me to take part. I refused. Finally he lured me to the waterfront one night and onto a rowboat, on the pretext that in a tramp steamer in the harbor some of the sailors had fine smuggled brocades of Malabar on which large profits could be made if I would go to the men to assure them of the firm's standing. On the ship's decks I was set upon, hustled below and while the officers slept peacefully in their cabins, I, in the ship's hold, was tortured, threatened and made party to this plot, Hakron Cheraker representing to me that he merely wished to frighten Mademoiselle Naga into returning East with him and only intended to terrorize Weyburne by introducing a harmless cobra into his room and by lacerating his wrist through the hole in the wall, in order to give him the impression he had been scratched by its fangs.

"Hakron Cheraker had secured for Tonio, through my intercession, the place in the supply room, No. 1314, next to Weyburne's, I calling up the hotel and representing myself as an English nobleman who had employed Tonio as

my body servant abroad and as wishing to place him in New York. The scheme succeeded. Tonio was placed in charge of the supply room.

"I was in the corridor last night in the crowd and first suggested that Mademoiselle Naga was guilty. But at Hakron Cheraker's suggestion, always. When Mr. McMurdoo came to our rooms to-day and indicated to me that he had strong reasons to suspect me (I mean us) it was Hakron Cheraker who urged that he be put out of the way. When Mr. McMurdoo took and retained this room, it seemed he was playing into our hands. When we saw him in it less than an hour ago with Mademoiselle Naga, I (that is, Hakron Cheraker) raged, and when he kissed her before the uncurtained window he had signed his death warrant, so it seemed to—Hakron Cheraker.

"When Tonio and Cheraker came to present the cobra at the hole through which they hoped to have it strike Mr. Weyburne, the serpent was so torpid from long confinement in the small basket that they feared it would fail, so they adopted the plan of first filling a hyperdermic syringe full of some powerful poison Hakron Cheraker had made up for cleaning antique jewelry, testing gems, corroding brasses to make them like antique.

"Well, they, that is Tonio and Hakron Cheraker together, should be blamed for the crime, they did noose Weyburne's arm against the wall, through the steam pipe hole, plunge into it the syringe, all in a flash, and sent the fatal stuff into his arm, put in the cobra to bring the blame upon Mademoiselle Naga.

"No, I tell you, I was not to blame. I was but a tool in the hands of this Hakron Cheraker."

BATHURST, N. J. August 31, 19——

JANE MURRAY—The Hotel Allondayle:

DEAREST JANE:—You cannot guess, my sweet one, how pleased we were to hear that you and Mr. Carlin at last are to wed. Here in our happy hope, returned after our honeymoon, McMurdoo and I are enjoying life to the utmost. Our marriage is the best thing that ever has come into our lives. It has brought me the love of a good man—one of the world's most famous toxicologists and herptologists. He and I truly appreciate each other. He is perhaps the one man in the world who could appreciate and understand one like me.

Now, as to the truth or the reverse of Hurribruddha's story, I am not certain. At the moment he was fatally stabbed by Hakron Cheraker, whose breechclout no one had searched for the kris he had concealed there, he had not finished his story, but had told enough to link it, with mine, into a chain of evidence that would have made a perfect case, Captain Trevelyn has told me, especially as it was capped by the contents of that bottle that McMurdoo seized from the two savages and of that other object, which he kept concealed from us—just to make more of a mystery of it, I suspect. That mysterious object was a large hyperdermic syringe; the bottle contained a powerful poison, the same that killed Mr. Weyburne and was to be used to slay McMurdoo in the same way.

I had a note from Captain Trevelyn the other day, saying that Hakron and Tonio have not recovered from the effects of the poison they swallowed and which they managed to get from somewhere after they were jailed. Their case is hopeless—death from creeping paralysis will take them.

McMurdoo watches me as I write, happy, blowing double smoke-rings in rapid succession. I can hear the buzz of a new diamond-back rattler in the distance. He has just added it to our happy family.

The postscript on Trevelyn's letter says "McMurdoo insists that he depends on facts, not on theories, for detection of crimes that interest him. Well, that is *his theory* of detection."

I read that to McMurdoo, and he said:

"Tell Trevelyn that he'll learn if you give him time enough what I'm driving at with my system of detection. Let him take the credit for the case. I don't care. Out of it I got you and saved you from becoming the innocent victim of the cunning plot that constituted the King Cobra Mystery."

Lovingly yours,

MRS. HORTENSE LEBEOUF MCMURDOO.

P. S.—McMurdoo says the poison they used in the syringe was one of the most powerful cyanides, of which a single smell sometimes kills. H. L. McM.

Don't miss the remarkable mystery story coming in our next number by the talented William Hamilton Osborne.

SPECIAL NOTICE

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TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.

1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Crittenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Chas. F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, By Redfield Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, By Edith Sessions Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
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OTHER WORLDS

By SYLVIA CUSHMAN

"Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee, tho' I die."

JEANNE sat quietly staring straight ahead. The man at her side moved his hand slowly across the lounge until his fingers came in contact with hers.

"What are you thinking about, dear?"

Jeanne turned, and looking at him, smiled that peculiar twisted smile which was characteristic of her.

"I don't know," she replied in an even, rather heavy voice for so small a woman.

"Aren't you glad?" he asked.

"Of course, silly."

"You don't act it."

"I do. You know I'm glad. What have I been waiting for all these years if not for the hour when you would be free and we could be married?" She hesitated a bit over the last words, and looking at him, burst into laughing. He was silent a minute then joined her and, if as in answer to an unspoken question, he said:

"I know it. Isn't it funny all these years we have been so wonderfully happy even though the world disapproved of us!"

"The world didn't disapprove of us," said the girl seriously. "It was the people in the world that disapproved. The world loved us—as we love the world."

"The divorce is made absolute on Monday. We will be married right away."

Jeanne nodded. "Yes."

"Tell me, little girl, what do you see ahead of us?" asked the man eagerly. "Can you see clearly to-night?"

She smiled again that odd little smile and, freeing herself gently from his grasp, stood up. Half-closing her eyes, she waited. The man gazed at her intently.

"Years of love and happiness, never separation—children, can you see that?" he half-whispered.

Still she remained silent.

The little clock on the mantel struck softly.

Starting slightly, she opened her eyes.

"I can't see anything, dear," she murmured. "I wish I could. It's all dark. But separation—never. I shall be with you always; here and Beyond."

The man rose to his feet and, walking to her, clasped her in his arms. "Always," he breathed. "You're sure?"

"Sure."

"And children?"

"Yes; why not?"

He kissed her silently in reply. Robert Marble was forty-eight years old, and one of the wealthiest feed brokers in New York. At thirty he had married Marian de Camp, the only daughter of Copeland de Camp, an artist of great renown.

Marian was decidedly "free' in every respect. Never loving her husband and only marrying him to make secure her place in society, she had soon dismissed him, almost entirely, from her thoughts and directed her attentions elsewhere. Anyway, Robert was old-fashioned and at times common. He wanted quiet home life, free from clubs, dinner parties, operas, etc. He wanted children. Marian didn't, so there were no children. As a matter of fact she didn't want him, so why should she be annoyed with his offsprings?"

One night in May, eight years ago, Marble had left his house, where his wife was giving a dinner party, previous to an evening at the opera, and started for his club downtown. It was raining hard.

With great difficulty his chauffeur threaded his way in and out of the congested traffic on the avenue. Exasperated, Marble yelled through the tube:

"Turn through Thirty-third to Madison avenue. It's not so crowded."

Felix followed directions with disastrous results. A girl darting out from the shadows of the high buildings was struck by the front wheels of their machine and thrown clear of the traffic onto the sidewalk.

Marble took her to the hospital. She was Jeanne Richards, a chorus girl with the "Golden Dream" Co. Eighteen years old, she had been in the business two years, since the death of an aunt with whom she had been living.

The results of the accident proved to be a broken ankle and several minor bruises. The injury to her ankle rendered her *hors de combat* as far as any future stage dancing was concerned and Jeanne didn't seem to mind. She didn't like the stage or its people. Why? Because you have to accept one thing to "get there"—a man. And Jeanne didn't want the man or any man.

His interest in the girl growing the more he saw her, Marble paid constant visits to the hospital. When Jeanne was finally dismissed, he got her a position as model in the studio of a friend, Harry Mahr; then, finding that Mahr was making love to her, promptly secured a place for her in a little Japanese tea house on East Ninth street. Adorned in an orange-and-brown kimona, Jeanne served tea every afternoon and evening with Marble as one of her steadiest customers.

It was at this time that Jeanne developed unusual talents—that of "seeing clear." More and more these clairvoyant powers became apparent. Marble, being practical rather than theoretical, was at first skeptical, but at last became convinced that Jeanne's power was unusual and true.

From that time on she studied, constantly developing these qualities and with great success, then the inevitable occurred—Marble fell in love with her. That he tried hard to fight against it must certainly be said of him, but every time he promised himself he would not see her, he would almost invariably go to the phone and make an appointment for dinner.

A man doesn't have to say to a woman, "I love you," before she knows it. There are a million-and-one ways of making her understand, and Marble had conveyed his affection in every one of these.

One day they sat alone in one of those rustic little summer-houses in Central Park. They had started out to find the Bear Cave. Robert, for some unknown reason, had

had that for an excuse for entering the park, but strangely enough the Bear Cave eluded their view and was never found. Instead they discovered the delightful little summer-house and sat down.

Jeanne chatted gaily on every subject in the world with Marble making the intelligent comment of "Uh-huh!" ever so often.

It was growing late, the autumn sun was sinking behind the trees, giving the park a wonderful touch of crimson and gold. Jeanne looked around and, stretching out her arms and throwing her head far back, breathed deep the fall air.

"Oh, I love it. Don't you? This wonderful weather!"

"Yes," he replied, "it's beautiful, isn't it?"

Both were silent, absorbing the glories of nature, then, "Jeanne, dear," the man leaned towards her.

She turned and met his gaze.

"What?"

"I—I,—aren't you cold with only that thin suit on?"

The girl laughed merrily.

"Not a bit," she answered.

But the man did not laugh. He only sat staring at her.

"What is it?" she finally asked.

"I love you," he said.

"I love you, too," she answered. Then with a sharp, smothered exclamation drew away from him and, half-turning her head, leaned up against the rustic woodwork and cried softly.

In an instant the man was at her side, his arms fast around her, holding her tightly.

"Jeanne, Jeanne," he murmured. "Don't cry, dear. I shouldn't have spoken. I'm not free to speak to any one, but I can't help it—I love you, that's all."

The girl had stopped crying now and looked at him, smiling sadly.

"It isn't all your fault," she told him. "I saw from the first that you—that you cared, and I encouraged you because I too cared—I—oh, Bob!"

Breaking off suddenly, she buried her head in his neck and again started to cry.

Awkardly the man patted her shoulder and spoke soft, caressing words.

The wind moaned softly through the trees, seeming to breathe songs from shadow throats and whispered forbidden tales of love. All nature voiced a call that has been heard through all eternity—the call of love to love—and the man, hearing it, answered.

"I love you; I worship you," he cried. "As long as there is breath in my body I'll never let you go."

Hot, burning kisses fell upon her lips. Again and again he kissed her.

Three years passed, during which time Jeanne studied hard, mastering French, German and Italian as the reward.

Her powers to see clear were not ignored, and under the tutorship of Madame Raimon she studied night and day with the wonderful God-given gift. Madame Raimon was a theosophist, and with very little difficulty succeeded in interesting the girl in the study.

Jeanne listened to all she was taught, fascinated, but understanding.

"Now I know," she told Madame Raimon, "why some things have always been so real to me. It was because I am not learning them for the first time. You know I once wrote a short piece of poetry about my thoughts. Would you like to hear it?"

"By all means," said her friend.

Slowly Jeanne recited:

"Out of the east, as it nears into dark,
Comes a voice, soft and low,
Ever it's calling me,
Strangely, beseechingly,
'Thou didst once die here,
Long ages ago.'"

Madame Raimon leaned forward studying, to the best of her ability, the young girl before her.

Dark, slender, with blue eyes, a type found on the continent more than in America. Her face was round, eyes large and full. She had the faculty of appearing either very, very young or very, very old. At times she was sixteen then the next minute sixty.

"Jeanne," said Madame Raimon slowly, "I believe you really did die in the east 'long ages ago.'"

Jeanne looked at her for a moment.

"Yes," she replied. "I know I did, and I did not die alone."

About this time Jeanne met Dorothy Rollins, a young girl of her own age, who had come to New York as an art student. Dorothy was Jeanne's build with red-brown hair. Anyway, Dorothy called it red-brown, but the red seemed to gain the ascendency. Her eyes were blue, and all in all she seemed an English type of woman.

She was as quiet as Jeanne was quick—although both girls were full of fun and had many giggling feasts together.

They hired an apartment in the Greenwich Village settlement, and were as happy as two young girls at their age should be. Dorothy was without mother and father, the same as Jeanne; she was also in love, as Jeanne was. Day by day the common bond of sympathy between the two girls grew and grew and their happiness was complete in each other's company.

The petty jealousies found existing between most girls was entirely lacking. They wore each other's clothes, smoked each other's cigarettes, and agreed on most every subject beneath the sun; although Dorothy was objective rather than subjective. Jeanne succeeded in interesting her in theosophy, the Divine Wisdom. After careful study, Dorothy accepted it, but drew the line at Spiritualism.

"I can't believe that our friends who are dead are really by our side, as you say. It seems selfish, I think."

"Selfish?" asked Jeanne.

"Certainly. Now listen. While our friends were on this plane with us we loved them and they loved us. They die. We're left alone, and you claim they are at our side. Don't you think it would make them feel badly to see our sufferings provided we were unhappy? Take a man and wife for instance—the wife dies, leaving her husband and children. Suppose the husband grieves long for her. Wouldn't it make her feel badly to see his grief?"

"Yes, I suppose so," admitted Jeanne.

"Well, now, on the other hand, suppose the husband should almost immediately marry again, as lots of men do, don't you suppose it would break her heart to see her husband so soon forget and her children calling another by the sacred name of mother?"

Jeanne made no answer, but was thinking deeply. Finally she spoke.

"Perhaps you're right, Dot. Quite truthfully spiritulism never interested me as theosophy has. I guess the truth of the whole thing is that we don't know, and no one else knows. We can only suspect and believe, but I do believe almost anything that would take me away from

the othodox churches with their petty formalities, rote of sermons and two-cent ministers." It was Dorothy speaking, and her blue eyes flashed as she raised up on her knees on the sofa and continued waving her hands excitedly aloft in a characteristic manner.

"Christianity," she sneered. "Bah! Some day I'm going to write a book called 'Christianity versus Truth.' It always made me so hopping mad when I used to go to church and the minister used to turn and face the congregation and say:

"'The blessings of God be on you.' Why didn't he say 'The blessings of God be on us'? Who is he, anyway—just mere mortal like the rest of us. Christianity! Churchianity, that's what it is, and not one atom of truth on the real understanding of God is there. Give me truth wherever it is or whatever form it presents itself in, and I will bow low before it. But don't give me the Eternal I of the Christian minister and priest."

Jeanne laughed merrily at her friend's tirade of religion, then suddenly grew serious.

"Dorothy," she said in a low voice. "Listen, dear, let's make each other a promise. Whichever one of us dies first, if it is possible to return from beyond the grave, let that one return and convince the other of immortality."

Dorothy appeared startled at this peculiar proposition, but put her hands in that of her chum.

"All right, I agree," she said.

The clock on the mantel chimed softly.

"My heavens, woman, it's midnight!" cried the denouncer of churches. "Come to bed."

That summer Dorothy promised John Kimberly she would marry him in the fall, and Marian Marble filed divorce proceedings against her husband—charging unfaithfulness.

John Kimberly was the only son of John Kimberly, the lawyer. He was twenty-four years old and was expecting a position in Japan as civil engineer, and it was to Japan that Dorothy promised him she would go and live. Jeanne and Bob would be married then and were planning on taking up a residence in London. But somehow, as the time grew nearer and nearer to the close of the Marble divorce, Jeanne seemed to change. Instead of being bright and cheerful, she would sit for hours staring straight ahead and at times Dorothy would come upon her unexpectedly only to find her crying.

"Jeanne, dear, what is the matter?" Dorothy would ask, distressed at her friend's grief at a time when she should be so happy.

"I don't know, Dot," Jeanne sobbed. "Somehow I am afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"That's what I don't know. Just afraid. I feel as if Bob would be taken away from me. Oh, Dot, I would die without him."

"Be taken away?" cried the astounded Dorothy. "What's the matter with you? Isn't he getting a divorce so you can be married?"

"I know, I know," said Jeanne, laughing sheepishly. "I guess I'm just a fool."

"Your head is too full of that clairvoyant nonsense. That's what it is," Dorothy told her. "You're always seeing queer things. I know most of the time you're right, but just the same I don't think it's good for you."

"I suppose not," Jeanne admitted. "Come on, let's go out and take a walk. I feel as if I were millions of miles away from the earth."

But before they could leave the apartment Bob had rung up that he was downstairs

"Come up, dear," Jeanne called through the tube. "Dorothy and I are all alone."

After shaking hands with her friend's lover, Dorothy excused herself and retreated to their bedroom and was soon busy with her painting.

One hour passed, two, three—still Bob and Jeanne sat and talked.

"To-morrow, dearest, we will be married," he said, fondly kissing her.

"Yes," she whispered. "To-morrow we will be together never to be separated."

"Never," he breathed. "Never."

As he rose to go she suddenly flung her arms around his neck.

"Oh, Bob!"

Her manner alarmed him. Curiously he met her distracted gaze.

"Jeanne, what's the matter?"

But in an instant she had recovered herself and stood laughing before him.

"Nothing," she said merrily. "Run along, dear boy. I'll be at the Astor at 10 sharp in the morning."

He kissed her. She clung to him desperately for a moment, the next instant he was out of sight in the descending elevator.

The girl stood staring at the elevator well in front of her, then turned and walked slowly into the apartment, shutting the door behind her.

Dorothy Rollins had long since gone to bed and lay waiting patiently for Jeanne to come and turn out the light. But Jeanne did not come.

Twice Dorothy called her name through the long hall, but no answer.

Disgusted, Dorothy got out of bed, put on her kimona and satin slippers and started for the parlor.

"Say, woman, will you come to bed?" she inquired, pushing aside the embroidered portières. "How long do you think I—Jeanne—— What's the matter?"

For Jeanne stood in the middle of the floor, her hands outstretched, her face ashen; she stared with unseeing eyes over Dorothy's head and trembled from head to foot.

Horror-stricken, Dorothy drew back and gazed at her.

"Jeanne," she cried again. "What is——" She stopped, for Jeanne was speaking. Her voice came from far away, her lips twisted in a pitiful attempt to articulate.

"Oh, my God—dead—he's dead!" was all she said. Back and forth she swayed, then plunged forward headfirst and crumpled up at her friend's feet.

With a wild cry Dorothy darted out of the room, opening the outer door of their apartment, and, crossing the hall, beat her two hands on the door opposite them.

"Doctor Lloyd! Doctor Lloyd!" she screamed hysterically. Two seconds passed which seemed ages before Doctor Lloyd opened the door. As he did so, Dorothy lurched forward and fell in his arms.

"Miss Rollins, what is the trouble?" he asked, startled by the sight of her face.

"Jeanne, Miss Richards, something is the matter—come quick!" she gasped. Clutching him by the arm, she dragged him across the hall into their apartment. On the floor Jeanne lay white and silent.

With a smothered exclamation Doctor Lloyd knelt by her side and, leaning over, listened to her heart. Half a minute passed, then he looked up into Dorothy's agonized face.

"She's dead!" he said shortly. "Heart failure."

When Robert Marble left Jeanne's apartment it was raining hard; the wind blew the rain into his face, and he could scarcely see two feet ahead of him.

Stepping off the curbing into the street, he started across. Somewhere in the distance came the sharp honking of an automobile. Marble darted back quickly, but was too late; the machine struck him, as his machine had struck little Jeanne Richards eight years before, and threw him head first against the curbing.

A confusion of voices and frightened cries seemed all around him. He tried to sit up with the help of some one who had hold of his arm.

"Oh!" he groaned in agony, and fell back.

It was growing dark; he opened his eyes, but could not distinguish a single object.

Out of the bable of voices he heard a single sentence.

"He is dying!"

He smiled and lay back in the arms that held him.

"Jeanne," he murmured. The rest was silence.

Five years later Dorothy Kimberly sat with her husband in a little tea house in Osaka.

Ah! the minor harmonies of the Orient; they have the surge of the sea, the moaning of the winds, the weeping of a world of longing and desire in their composition.

When was there ever a night like this?

Dorothy gazed upward at the millions of worlds flashing, like fiery eyes, above her and on the evening breeze came back something that Jeanne Richards had said to her long ago when they lived together in New York.

"In other worlds, more fair
Than this one,
Reunited we will be
Forever!"

"Other worlds," murmured Dorothy softly, taking hold of her husband's arm.

"John, dear, do you believe in immortality?"

Kimberly looked at his wife and, kissing her hand affectionately, laughed shortly.

"I don't know—just what do you mean by that?"

"I mean," said Dorothy, "that there is no death. This life on this earth is only a dream; the life to come is the real waking one, and, John, do you think that a person dead can return to you if—if they promised to?"

"You're thinking of Jeanne?"

"Yes, I'm thinking of Jeanne. She seems very near tonight, as if I could almost stretch out my hands and touch her—so."

Kimberly laughed again. "It's the east," he told her. "It's got into your blood. These natives believe in all that sort of thing. You mustn't let it affect you."

Dorothy started to reply, but was interrupted by a young Japanese officer who came to inform her husband he was wanted by the American superintendent who had just arrived.

Kimberly hastily arose and, with a few loving words to his wife, hurried after the messenger.

Left to herself, Mrs. Kimberly arose and went into the garden.

Oh, those purple nights of Japan. Wonderful! How wonderful! The iris gardens, the festoons of lanterns strung from street to street.

A sudden feeling of sadness mingled with a desire to see her dear friend of other days came over her.

Silently she raised her hands over her head and called aloud:

"Jeanne, Jeanne, come back, you promised you would; come back."

Weird, barbaric music floated out to her from the little tea house.

"Jeanne," she called again. "I call you back, I——"

At her feet a white misty substance was forming slowly. Slowly it grew in size, taking peculiar shapes. Finally, it took on a human form. Jeanne Richards stood before her.

With a low cry Dorothy started back, and would have turned and fled had not a voice called her "Dorothy." It called so soft and low that it seemed almost one with the sighing of the trees.

"You loved me when I was on earth, why are you afraid of me now?"

Slowly, step by step, Dorothy came towards her.

"Jeanne," she murmured. "Oh, God, am I mad?"

Her friend smiled a bit sadly.

"Never were you more sane."

By great physical effort the frightened woman managed to think and ask a question.

"Bob, he is with you?"

"With me—a part of me—forever."

With a loud sob Dorothy ran forward and threw herself in her friend's arms. She fell heavily to earth. The apparition had vanished. There was nothing there.

Somewhere in the distance she heard her husband's voice calling her.

Struggling to her feet, she answered him in a voice that could not be heard a foot away.

By this time he had reached the garden and came hastily towards her.

"Dot, where have you been? I've—why, what's the matter? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

She caught hold of his arm, and, leaning close to him, laid her head on his shoulder.

"No, John," she finally said, "I have seen no ghost—all is real. Come."

She led him towards the tea house. On the steps she stopped and pointed upward at the stars.

"Other Worlds," she said, smiling into his face.

"While we, like Mary, weep at the grave, our friend, like Christ, unrecognized, stands at our side and speaks our name. Death is only pushing aside of the portière and passing into another room."

Kimberly looked at her, wonderingly. Slowly they pushed the door one side and went in together.

Two feature stories in our next issue. One is by Willis Lathrop—an exciting detective romance entitled "The Smell of Gasolene."

AN OLD MANUSCRIPT RECENTLY PUBLISHED

THOUGH written four hundred years ago, Leonardo da Vinci's book on anatomy has only recently been published, and surgeons are only now discovering the marvels it contais.

Lecturing recently on it in London, Prof. William Wright pointed out that when it was written the circulation of the blood, osmosis, oxygen and the microscope were all unknown. All doctors believed that the arteries were full of free air, and that the blood was aerated in the heart. The interior arrangement of the heart was also misunderstood.

But Leonardo denied that air entered the heart, and wrote that the blood was "refreshed" in the lungs; he described accurately the anatomy of the heart and large blood vessels and the action of the muscles of the chest and abdomen in respiration.

THE BIG DAY

By NELLE M. JACKMAN

STEALTHILY the office door was pushed open. Bertha felt rather than heard the action. She wheeled in her chair. Then she frowned.

"Good-morning," greeted the intruder.

The words were dripping with sweetness. They were accompanied by a smile—to Bertha, obnoxious.

"Good-morning, Doctor Boyd," she coldly replied.

The caller was a dark-haired, fleshy man clad in a black suit that looked as though it had never been pressed. He came close to where Bertha sat at her typewriter. His fat hands and black eyes were so repugnant a shiver passed over her.

"Where is Mr. Klaeton?" went on the honeyed voice.

"He isn't in," she denied.

She was afraid to have this man see her employer to-day of all days.

"Oh, yes, but he is, little golden-hair," gloated the man as he removed his portly person to a spot nearer the door marked "Private."

Bertha sprang to her feet. She drew her slight figure up to its full five feet. Her blue eyes showed anger. They looked black under the dark lashes.

"My name is Miss Causland," she informed him.

Her full bosom heaved under the white silk waist that parted at the neck and showed a very white throat. He laughed satirically.

"Be careful or I'll——"

"Indeed you won't," she interrupted.

The beady eyes were bent upon her. Then the doctor tapped on the opaque glass of the inner office. Bertha's lips curled. She hated this man with his rubber soles and cat-like movements.

The private door opened from within. Mr. Klaeton stood in the aperture. His tall muscular frame, clad in a gray tweed suit, almost filled the space. His brown hair, parted on the side, waved backward revealing a very high forehead.

"Good-morning, doctor. Come in," he invited.

"Your stenographer just told me you were not here," tattled the man.

"Why, Bertha," reproved her employer.

His gray eyes seemed to seek the reason. The girl shrugged her shoulders. Her eyes looked volumes. Mr. Klaeton smiled. Then Bertha bent her blonde head over her interrupted work at the typewriter. The two men passed into the other room. She heard the key turn in the lock. Her breath came fast. For a few minutes she tried to wear out her indignation upon the machine.

Again the outer door opened. Bertha paused in her task. Bud, the office-boy, entered. He had not yet reached the long pants age and he clung to a flowing red tie. His hair was of the colorless, porcupine variety. He began to brush it in front of an oval mirror set in the closet door.

"Think my hair will ever lay down like Mr. Klaeton's?" he queried.

Bertha failed to reply

"What's the matter?" solicitated Bud, coming closer.

"Doctor Boyd is in there," whispered the girl.

She pointed in the direction of the private office. Bud bristled.

"What does he want to come now for? Don't he know it's the big day?"

"Of course. That's why."

"Now he will use his influence over the boss and that other lawyer will win," he blustered, ramming his fists into his pocket. Then he frowned as deeply as in his diminutiveness he could.

"That's what I'm afraid of. Bud, we *must* do something. Mr. Klaeton has lost so many big cases here lately, and it is all that doctor's fault."

"It does seem like every time the boss gets a suit that counts, the first thing you know along comes Doctor Boyd, uses that power of his and Mr. Klaeton loses," mused Bud.

"His strange influence over Mr. Klaeton grows stronger each time he exercises it," Bertha worried.

"After a while the people won't ask the boss to be their lawyer."

"You are right, Bud. If the doctor uses this power and keeps Mr. Klaeton away from the trial again to-day, I am afraid the public will denounce our employer. The whole town is much interested in this case. I have heard a great deal of talk. The results may be serious if he fails to appear this morning."

"Oh, Miss Bertha, can't we beat him at his game? Why, Mr. Klaeton is the smartest lawyer in town if he'd just keep away from that old doctor."

Just then Mr. Klaeton opened the inner door. He came to the telephone. Doctor Boyd leaned his bulk against the framework of the doorway. Bud backed off into a corner. Bertha arranged some typewritten pages. The entire atmosphere was charged with two silent battling forces. Mr. Klaeton called a number. Then he began to talk.

"Is that you, Hornby? This is Klaeton. I want you to represent me in the Curtis case to-day."

"Mr. Klaeton!" gasped Bertha.

A subdued groan came from Bud's direction.

"That's right, Klaeton, go on!" commanded the doctor.

Klaeton's voice resumed.

"It is impossible for me to appear. Yes, Bud will bring over the statistics. Thank you. That's all at present. Good-by."

As Mr. Klaeton replaced the desk telephone, Bertha clasped his coat sleeve.

"Mr. Klaeton!" she implored. "Surely you don't mean it. Why, Mr. Hornby can never plead that case like you. And after you have worked so hard on the evidence!"

"Bertha, you are right," her employer decided.

"Come over here. I want to talk to you," crooned the doctor.

Like an automaton, Mr. Klaeton turned and entered his private office. The two listeners heard the rasp of the

turned key. The girl covered her face with her hands. Bud sat on her desk.

"Ain't that the worst!" he ejaculated. "If cussin' would do any good, I'd break the record."

Bertha raised her white face. She took the boy's hands in hers.

"It's just like we feared," she sobbed. "Bud, we've *got* to win."

"I'd like to kill that old doctor," Bud stormed.

"Mr. Klaeton is too good a man," went on Bertha. "He doesn't realize that Doctor Boyd is not a friend. He is always looking for the good in people."

"We *got* to get the boss out of it," agreed Bud.

Both sat silently buried in thought. Suddenly a ray of enlightenment beamed from the boy's freckled face.

"Tell Miss Aitken!" he exclaimed.

Bertha felt that the problem was solved.

"Market 9984," she breathed into the telephone.

Recognition came from the required number.

"Is that you, Miss Aitkin?" whispered Bertha.

"Yes," was the response.

"This is Bertha Causland. Will you please come down to the office? I would rather not tell you over the telephone," continued the girl.

"Why do you want me?" asked Miss Aitkin.

"You are the only one able to do good. I've tried and failed."

"Bertha, you don't mean——?" panted the voice at the other end.

"Yes."

"Like last Wednesday?"

"The result will be worse."

"Where is he?"

"Here."

"I'll be down immediately."

"Thank you, Miss Aitkin, I felt sure that you would."

Bertha replaced the receiver. Bud went over and put his ear to the keyhole. The key was in the lock, so he could see nothing. He doubled up his fists. Then he stalked back.

"I wisht I was a man!" he blurted out.

In a little while Miss Aitkin entered. She was dressed in a putty-colored suit of silk poplin. Brilliant autumn leaves trimmed the small straw hat of the same color. Her dark-brown hair waved out from beneath the short brim. Her hazel eyes were troubled. Fear had robbed her cheeks of their usual rosy color. Bertha quickly arose.

"Perhaps I did wrong to trouble you, Miss Aitkin, but I don't want to see Merrill win. I hate that man."

"It is enough that I am here. Tell me all you know," restlessly answered Lois Aitkin.

Bud placed a chair for the visitor. The three drew very close together. Then they sat and held a whispered consultation.

"What I cannot understand," Bertha put in, "is, why does Mr. Klaeton, a man of such intellect, even tolerate this man?"

"Bertha, Doctor Boyd is one of the most respected physicians in this city," reprimanded Lois.

Bud looked his contempt, but through the entire conversation kept discretely silent.

"If you will only listen to all I have to say, I am inclined to think that you will agree with my opinion," responded Bertha.

"You may tell me."

"The other day," she began, "when you and your friends were in this office, I could not help but hear you beg Mr. Klaeton to refrain from being a subject, and how he laughed and treated the whole thing as a joke."

"Bertha, I have an antipathy for the entire affair."

"I *despise* that doctor!" blurted the girl.

"Hurry and tell me," insisted Lois.

"As you know, the Curtis trial comes up to-day."

"Yes, and——"

Bertha cut short the fevered question.

"Mr. Klaeton has been procuring evidence for weeks. We all know that Curtis is guilty. Guilty, as sure as the world stands. Hasn't he robbed enough widows of their mites? Hasn't he goaded and ground men to earth until in desperation they took their own lives? He has played with the law until he thinks it is a ball of putty to be molded at his will by the lawyer-sculptor, Merrill."

Bud leaned still closer in his interest.

"But, Bertha, hasn't Mr. Klaeton enough evidence to win the case for the poor Craigs? Surely justice will be meted out this time," responded Lois.

"Enough evidence, yes. Provided *he* conducts the proceedings himself. You know there isn't a lawyer in this State, or any other for that matter, that can plead a case as well as Mr. Klaeton."

"You can't mean that he will not——"

"Just that. You don't know the meanness of this man Merrill as I do. Neither will you admit the treacherous qualities of Doctor Boyd. The only thing I have to substantiate my claim is my own experience. The world would laugh at my logic; would call it absurd. Still I hope to convince you, Miss Aitkin."

"I have never dared express my opinion of Doctor Boyd. He is a social power and is the family physician of the foremost people in town."

"The inhabitants, sooner or later, will find how he hypnotizes them to his own financial benefit. And then this man Merrill," continued Bertha. "Doesn't he take the stand for every criminal there is?"

"Why, Bertha, he is one of the richest men in town."

"Of course he is. Why shouldn't he be? Any lawbreaker gladly gives all Merrill demands in order to keep out of the penitentiary. Now with Mr. Klaeton gone, this poor innocent Mr. Craig is doomed."

"But, Bertha, surely Mr. Klaeton will go to the trial. Why, he has worked on that case just because I wished it. Mrs. Craig has been a second mother to me. You know my own died when I was seventeen." There were tears in Lois' eyes.

"No, Miss Aitkin, that is why I called you. Mr. Klaeton has sent a lawyer friend, Mr. Hornby, in his stead." The girl's voice was low, even and sad.

"Bertha!" It was a smothered cry.

"Mr. Hornby is a nice man, but he is more or less a novice. He doesn't understand law like Mr. Klaeton. Neither has he the force. I fear his pleading will fall upon deaf ears. Merrill *knows* that with Mr. Klaeton out of the way, the day is his. Won't you try, Miss Aitkin? Try to win him back?"

Lois' eyes dilated. Her breast heaved. She removed a glove; then she arose. From the third finger of her left hand she slowly drew a diamond solitaire. She laid it on the desk.

"This is too much," she hoarsely sobbed. "I have begged Philip Klaeton not to submit to this hypnotism. Always he laughs at my prejudice. I cannot link my life with a man like that. You may so inform him." Lois started toward the door.

Bertha grasped her hands. "Don't, Miss Aitkin! In heaven's name, *don't!* Why, Mr. Klaeton loves you. Wait

until I tell you. Then you will feel differently; you will see below the surface of things."

"It is no use," coldly asserted Lois. "To be so weak at such a time! Just when he is most needed."

"Listen, Miss Aitkin, listen!" pleaded Bertha. "I must relate the plan of those two in my own case. Then you will understand. I can't go into court and testify because who would take my word against these two? People would say, 'It is only a woman's intuition,' and laugh at my deductions. But to you, another woman, I can explain. You can perceive."

Lois, for a moment, looked steadily at Bertha.

"Please wait," the latter begged. "When I tell you, I know you will rescue him; not leave him—you know not what."

Lois paused. "Bertha, your tone is very convincing. You may tell me. I will not scatter it broadcast."

"Two years ago my father was placed in a situation similar to Mr. Craig's. He appealed to Mr. Klaeton who took the case. Mr. Merrill was the opponent lawyer employed by Curtis. Then, as now, Doctor Boyd was Merrill's contemporary."

"I do not comprehend your meaning."

"Wait. On the day of the trial Mr. Klaeton failed to appear, but sent another lawyer."

Lois' pale lips compressed themselves into a straight line.

"Father, as innocent as you are, Miss Aitkin, was convicted. The shock was too great. He had a weak heart, you know. He died there in the courtroom." The tears streamed down Bertha's face.

"Yet you want me to marry a man that fails a person in his hour of need? Never!"

"I haven't finished, Miss Aitkin." The tone was reproving.

"Go on."

"I made up my mind to get even with Merrill; to beat him at his game. I studied stenography and obtained this position with Mr. Klaeton. I observed how Doctor Boyd always wanted to hypnotize my employer whenever he had a case where Merrill represented the other side."

Lois leaned forward with interest.

"He failed many times. He always has to come to the office and takes Mr. Klaeton with him. He is not yet able to use this influence when distance intervenes."

"And when he came this morning?" Lois breathlessly inquired.

"I told him Mr. Klaeton was not in. He stared at me with those beady eyes and said: 'Oh, yes, but he is, little golden-hair.' Then he laughed and showed his short teeth and red gums."

"And you think Mr. Merrill sent him?"

"I know it. Why, Mr. Klaeton is the only lawyer that Merrill fears. Not once has he won a case over my employer."

"I never dreamed that Doctor Boyd was so dreadful."

"He and Merrill will stoop to anything." Bertha's contemptuous tone now turned to entreaty. "Won't you go in there and get Mr. Klaeton? Please do, Miss Aitkin. I *know* that you can. If you will go now there will be plenty of time. His unlooked-for appearance in the courtroom will confuse Merrill's mind. The tide will turn. I know that Mr. Klaeton will win."

Lois puckered her face in thought. Presently she spoke.

"You begged him to go on with the case? To refrain from this?"

"Yes."

"Then that settles it. If he hasn't will power enough to resist a hypnotic influence *now*, he never will. For my part, I prefer to marry Mr. Westcott. He is richer, better and bigger in every way and he wants me. I shall announce my engagement to him immediately."

"Miss Aitkin," cried Bertha, "surely you don't mean it. Won't you rescue Mr. Klaeton?" she wailed. "You're not going to forsake him now!"

"I have not made up my mind in a minute," informed Lois. "Life is a business. One can't live on mere sentiment." Then she was gone.

Bertha laid her head on the typewriter and cried.

"Now, ain't that the limit?" snorted Bud. "To quit a fellow just 'cause he's down. And the boss, the grandest man what is! Miss Bertha, we won't be pikers, will we?"

Bertha's quiet weeping ceased. She took hold of Bud's shoulders.

"Sonny," she murmured, "I've thought of a plan."

"What?" the boy breathlessly asked.

"Bud, I *must* get into that room."

"Do you think that coyote will let you in? No, sir! Never! He's got the boss under by now. Why, we'd have to bust down the door."

"There is another way."

"Where?'

"You'll have to do it. Do you think you can?"

"Trust me. Why, I'll hang from the roof by a rope and crawl in the window."

"At the end of the hall is the fire-escape. Creep over it and into the closet window. Be careful when you open the closet door—it might squeak. Then crawl to this door and unlock it. Remember, if Doctor Boyd sees you we will *never* get in."

The boy lifted an elated face.

"You just *bet* I'll do it," he vouched.

Bud left. Bertha crossed to the intervening door. Hatred surged within her; hatred for Doctor Boyd. Then his droning tones permeated to her. They surged around and engulfed her; they made her want to fight. It seemed an eternity to the waiting girl before the key craftily turned. She felt like shouting. Bud had been successful.

Inwardly, Bertha was a monument of agitation. She held a tight rein on herself. Her hand trembled as it sought the knob. Then perfect assurance sprang full-panoplied into existence. Boldly but quietly she pushed open the door. Doctor Boyd faced the other way. Bud still crouched on the floor. At first she was nauseated by the look of things. Mr. Klaeton slumped in his revolving office-chair. His hair looked uncombed; his eyes were closed; his suit wrinkled. The entire atmosphere of the room was slothful. The doctor's sole thought was his victim. He was leaning over toward the latter until his chin almost rested upon his rotund stomach.

"You can't open your eyes, you can't, you can't; try it, but you can't, no, you can't," he was saying over and over in the same sing-song.

Bertha turned sick. She was rooted to the spot. Her bosom heaved with indignation. The doctor snapped his fingers.

"Open your eyes," he ordered.

Klaeton complied. The gray depths presented a queer, hard, glittering look. The doctor held out a glass of liquor.

"Drink it," he directed.

Philip Klaeton, always an abstainer, raised a hand, but it fell limply between his knees.

"Drink it! Drink it!" commanded the hypnotist.

Philip submissively grasped the glass.

"Drink it!" stormed the doctor.

Obediently Philip raised the liquid to his lips.

This spurred the girl to action. She dashed the whisky

to the floor. Her eyes flashed fire. Her unexpected advent completely surprised and confused Doctor Boyd.

"You!" she flamed. "You employ hypnotism to wreck manhood. Instead of allowing Philip to use his force to become a power of the law, you seek to undermine his qualities. You conjure to sap the good that is in him. To make of him a weakling! Yes, worse!"

The doctor cowered before the fury of the girl. He drew himself in like a turtle. Two beady eyes stared out from the flabby flesh. His power over his victim waned. The clatter of broken glass upon the floor awakened the young man from his strange mesmeric condition. Bertha had arrived just in time. For the moment her will reigned supreme. Breathlessly Philip listened to her. He looked at the bottle of whisky the doctor had brought; at the débris on the floor. A flood of revulsion surged over him. Enlightenment came abruptly with the tempo of a cyclone. The baseness of the doctor stood out like letters of fire in the blackness of night. Philip realized the truth of Bertha's words. Angrily he turned upon Doctor Boyd.

"Beast that you are!" he thundered. "At last do I see your vileness. Go! I say, go! Never let me look upon your face again!"

The doctor realized his defeat. Like a whipped cur he slunk out. Bud ran to the outer door and slammed it upon the retreating figure. Bertha sank exhausted before her typewriter. Philip Klaeton paused beside her desk.

"What is this?" he asked, picking up the diamond ring.

Bertha started to her feet.

"Oh, I didn't mean for you to see that," she faltered. "I forgot it in the excitement." She reached out her hand for it.

"Yours?" Philip questioned.

"No—but I think I had better not tell you until to-morrow. The Curtis trial will soon be called. Don't you think you should go to the courthouse now?"

"I will be there in plenty of time, thanks to you. Tell me. Was Miss Aitkin here?"

Bertha colored. "Yes," she acknowledged. "I did wrong to call her, and I know I can straighten things out for you. I am so sorry. Please don't think about it now."

"You have straightened things out. I thank you."

"Shall I get the credentials for the Curtis case?"

"Not yet." Klaeton looked steadfastly at Bertha.

The girl's hands shook from nervousness.

"Do you know you called me Philip, in there?" he softly queried, pointing toward the other room.

"I beg your pardon. I was keyed to such a pitch I don't know what I said."

"Why did you do all of that for me?"

Bertha's confusion deepened.

"I had to," she murmured. "I just could not countenance that doctor getting such control over you. Every time Mr. Merrill is your opponent on a case, Doctor Boyd comes and cheats you of your birthright. You are too fine a man to be so treated."

Unceremoniously Philip grasped Bertha's hands.

"Girl," he passionately whispered, "you don't know how happy I am that Lois Aitkin returned the ring. At last I am free. Free from the promise I made to her dying mother. Now I can choose for myself; can try to win the one that for a long time I have silently worshiped."

Bertha gazed at him in wonder. Looked until her eyes fell before the love-flame in his. Blushed over the answering call of her own heart.

Beulah Poynter has written another interesting story for our Oct. 1st issue. Watch for it!

MAGIC SERUM DOES AWAY WITH LAZINESS

THE day of the lazy man is almost past if the expectations of Dr. L. D. Rogers are carried out, for it may soon be possible to inject the lazy person with a serum developed by this physician which is said to turn the easy-going man into a human dynamo of energy. Dr. Rogers formerly was a surgeon at the Cook County Hospital, Chicago, and has devoted several years to the study of serum treatments. After much experimentation he hit upon this plan for curing laziness: Take five drops of blood or some multiple of five from the person to be treated and put it into nineteen times as much sterilized water. When the mixture has been incubated twenty-four hours at fever heat further dilutions are made as required. The extent of these dilutions must be determined by the physician in charge and can only be decided after careful study of the case.

When ready for injection the serum thus obtained is said to be without color, taste or odor. It also is asserted that no chemical test has been found which will exactly determine its properties. But the results are represented as unfailing and of easy proof. From twenty to thirty drops of the serum are injected into a vein of the patient and the treatment is repeated at stated intervals. On the fourth day after her first treatment a woman who had been troubled with excessive fatigue and nerve exhaustion was able to walk ten miles with less difficulty than she had been able to walk a half mile previously. A man who was considered to be the village no-account, addicted to drink, and generally shiftless, was subjected to this treatment. In a short time he is said to have given up drinking, laid aside a stick with which he had walked for years, and turned to steady employment. Other equally remarkable transformations are accredited to the serum.

Perhaps the most peculiar of the many peculiar points about this serum is the fact that it must be made from the blood of the person to be treated. Otherwise it is understood to be worthless. Scientific explanation for this fact is found in the harnessing of water and oil for driving power. Water of itself has no propulsion power, unless driven by wind or force of gravity. But the moment it is heated and turned into steam its latent power becomes a great driving force. The same is true of gasoline, a placid enough body until a tiny spark sets free its gases, and these quickly generate enough strength to drive motor cars, submarines, even ships.

Upon the same principle, it is said, there is latent power in the blood of every person that will enable them to do prodigious things. Heretofore this power has only been made manifest by the strength of the individual's will, but it would now seem that science had found a purely physical way to speed up the low and invigorate the exhausted. If the plan should prove to be what its inventor hopes, it may be only another step to the day when we can eliminate "that tired feeling" altogether and go on endlessly with our work. But perhaps that very effort would exhaust this latent blood power and thereby defeat the new aim of science. Otherwise man might turn himself into a creative force that would never break down and could be kept running indefinitely, simply by taking a bit of the magic serum.

THE OTHER REVOLVER

By BEULAH POYNTER

HE turned in the doorway and gave a backward glance at the silent inert figure of the man lying in the slowly broadening pool of blood in the center of the room. A shuddering sigh escaped him, and he shook himself as though loathe to tear away from a horribly fascinating sight! Then abruptly he flung open the door and rushed madly down the stairs, almost colliding with his wife as she entered from the street, her arms full of parcels.

"Why, Alfred!" she gasped as she noticed his ashen pallor and the red blear of his eyes. "What is it, dear?"

"Your father!" he muttered. "I've killed him! Go to him!"

The woman shrank back against the wall with a cry of protest, but before she could question him further her husband had dashed out of the house.

Unable to fully comprehend the import of his startling words, she stood riveted to the spot. What he had just said was impossible—Alfred kill a man, his own father—she vaguely wondered why he had said her father, for her own father had died years ago, and although Alfred's father was dear to her and lived in her home, he was her husband's parent, not her own. She trembled so violently she could scarcely lift one leaden limb after another to climb the stairs, to see for herself the truth of his statements.

Even as she reached the doorway she knew what she would find within the silent room. She steadied herself by leaning against the dark paneled woodwork, braving herself for the ordeal, while waves of sickening certainty swept over her.

"Father," she whispered, hoping against hope that the kind voice she loved would answer from within. "Father!" She expected no reply. None came.

"Dear God!" she prayed as her cold fingers fumbled for the door-knob, and the impress of her slumping body flung it open. "Dear God!" The prayer ended in a scream of horror as her eyes rested upon the figure of the dead man. For one terrible moment she stood in blind, sickening agony, then with a superhuman effort she forced herself to go to his side, and kneeling, examined him to find if life were indeed gone.

"Dead! Father dead!" she whispered, recoiling as she touched the cold, damp face. Even as she realized to a certainty that life was extinct she recalled her husband's words.

"I have killed him!"

"No, no! Dear God, no!" she cried, staggering to her feet. "It isn't so! It can't be so!"

The great dark room seemed to cast sinister shadows upon the floor now stripped of carpets and summer attire, although daylight had not faded without. The high ceiling and dark, heavy hangings which draped the windows subdued the light and gave the impression of nightfall. As the little woman stood shuddering, the inert figure before her became blurred and indistinct in the darkening room, finally becoming a black splash on the polished floor. Still she stood watching it, until from force of habit she reached behind her and, turning a switch, flooded the room with light.

With the light she seemed to regain her poise; she knew something must be done. It was too late to summon a physician; her father-in-law was dead. She wished for Alfred, her husband, and for the other who had never failed her, though she refused to admit the wish, thrusting it from her as a wicked, unclean thought, then, with a shudder, she remembered her husband knew his father was dead, and had rushed past her out of the house. She could not call for her maid nor the butler, for only that day the servants had all been dismissed in an effort to curtail expenses which overlapped their income.

Only to the police could she look for aid, and she hesitated to call them until Alfred returned, until he could explain what he meant by the strange remark he had made.

In a subconscious way she noted the revolver lying by the dead man, and she wondered why she had not heard the noise of the shot, then instantly recollected she was not in the house at the time it was fired. She had gone to the store to do the marketing which had hitherto been done by a servant. A hysterical laugh escaped her as she realized she still held a bag containing some fruit and a loaf of bread.

A violent ringing on the telephone roused her, she staggered from the room into the hallway, uncertain as to which telephone was ringing; there were two, one at the foot of the stairs, the other in the library where the dead man lay. She groped about blindly in the semi-dark hallway as one does who is wakened out of a sound slumber and is uncertain as to his bearings. A loud jangle from the library made her retrace her steps, and on taking down the receiver of the telephone there, she knew it was the library phone calling. Her voice sounded far away, and strange to her as she said "Hello!" an unknown voice answered her.

"Mrs. Westbrooke?"

"Yes."

"This is police headquarters!" She gave a gasping cry and almost dropped the receiver from her nerveless hand. "Your husband is here and has given himself up. He says he has murdered his father. From his actions one would judge him insane. Are we needed there? Has anything happened?"

The woman steadied herself against the table, her cold lips trying to form the word yes, but no sound came, the receiver dropped and swung by the cord, hitting the table. Vaguely she heard a voice on the other end of the wire, then all became black; she was conscious of falling, then there came an utter blank.

There were strange men around her when she regained consciousness, and a pungent strong odor of something held against her nostrils which strangled her. On seeing, she realized her surroundings. One of the officers assisted her to rise, but she immediately dropped back on the sofa where they had placed her while unconscious. As soon as they saw she was able to speak they plied her with questions, which she strove to answer intelligibly, though the room seemed to be whirling about in a circle, and her questioners strange, uniformed creatures with double faces.

After a little she saw there were four of them, two dressed in conventional patrol uniform, the others in civilian clothing. Her cloudy sense clearing a bit, she realized they were offices and detectives and that one was a physician. Her intuition bade her be on her guard, and to say nothing which would further incriminate her hapless husband. She wanted to ask where he was, and looked helplessly about the room hoping to see him somewhere in the background.

She was a little frail woman unable to cope with any tragedy, and the events of the past few days had done a great deal to unsettle her and make her unfit for the ordeal under which she was suffering. But she had a keen mind, and she struggled hard to use it.

"Where are the servants?" asked the officer from headquarters. He had an abrupt manner, though his face was kindly, and the sympathy he felt for the woman was shown in his voice.

"I haven't any," she answered faintly. A lift of the eyebrows was the reply she received to the statement which sounded strangely coming from the mistress of a beautiful four-story brownstone house furnished lavishly and indicative of unlimited means. She noticed the incredulous look on the face of the detective, and hastened to add: "We dismissed them all to-day; my husband and his father—they are partners, you know—they met with business reverses recently which have necessitated us curtailing expenses—we were going to close our home—and now——" her voice broke.

"You dismissed the servants to-day?" again asked the officer.

"Yes, sir."

The physician who had been examining the body gave an exclamation, and she noticed for the first time the revolver that the inspector held in his hand, though the one she noticed beside her dead father-in-law still lay there. She, however, did not get the purport of the conversation between the officer and the medical man. When the man from headquarters turned toward her, his brows met in an unpleasant scowl, and his voice held a metallic ring as he asked her: "Mrs. Westbrooke, who discovered the body?"

"I don't know—oh—I did," she stammered, shivering as though with cold. She explained in a faltering way of how she had entered the library and found her father-in-law lying on the floor in the pool of blood, but before she could proceed very far the officer interrupted her by saying abruptly:

"You are hiding something from us, Mrs. Westbrooke; what you say is not altogether the truth!"

The woman gasped and started to protest, but Officer Blakely paid no attention to her exclamations. "Your husband has told us he had already informed you of his father's death," he said. "There is no use you're denying anything, Mrs. Westbrooke."

She gave a low wail and covered her face with her hands. "He didn't kill his father," she sobbed. "He didn't; I know he didn't! Alfred was wild and reckless, I know, but he never killed his father."

"Can you explain the presence of two revolvers in this room?" continued the officer.

Mrs. Westbrooke shook her head wearily.

"I can't explain anything," she said. "I don't understand it. I only know Alfred did not do it."

"Your husband never killed his father," said Officer Blakely, "for Mr. Westbrooke Senior committed suicide—we're certain upon that point!"

She started to her feet. "Suicide!" she cried. "Then why did Alfred——?"

"That is what we want to find out. He persists that he murdered his father. Call him, Flynn."

As the officer he addressed as Flynn re-entered the room, Alfred Westbrooke followed him in, and Alfred's wife did not know him. The man had aged twenty years in the interval between this hour and the time she last saw him; he was bent and broken-looking, ashen-faced. When he saw his father he gave a shuddering gasp and turned away, crying hoarsely:

"Take me away! I can't stand to look at him! Do what you will with me, but don't keep me here!" He covered his face with hands which shook with palsy.

"Alfred!" cried his wife, running to him and clasping her hands about his arm. "You didn't do this! Say you didn't do this! You couldn't!"

But the man paid no heed to her, only begging to be taken away and repeating he had given himself up.

"Come," said Officer Blakely, and preceding them, he led the way out of the library with its gruesome occupant into the wide hallway and cheerful sitting-room beyond. The self-confessed murderer collapsed utterly and sat on a low divan whimpering like a dog in pain, rocking his body backward and forward as wild animals are wont to pace their cages. The sympathy gradually faded from the face of his wife, becoming replaced by something very like horror and loathing. Suddenly she drew back, hitting her hand against her forehead.

"It's true! Oh, God! It's true!"

There was no pity in the detective's face when he addressed the whimpering man. "Here, you," he said, "buck up and tell us about it. Be a man."

Westbrooke raised his head and stared at him with bleary glazed eyes, eyes from which the light of reason seemed to be fading.

"We know you did not kill your father," continued the officer, "though why you should confess to doing so is beyond me——"

"You know I didn't——" muttered the man.

"Sure, your father committed suicide; on the library table we found a letter written just before he fired the shot, and everything else indicates he took his own life. Come, now, out with your side of it."

Westbrooke rose unsteadily and, facing his questioner, demanded to see the letter supposed to have been written by his father. The officer produced it, and the stricken man read it aloud in a broken whisper.

"To Whom It May Concern:

"Life without honor is a living death—the grave is infinitely preferable—and I feel that I am justified in taking this step. Through no fault of my own my business integrity is gone, together with my savings of years, my own and my family's good name. My son if he reads this, which I hope he will, will know what I mean. To be poor is no disgrace, to be dishonored is—I regret I must part with my dear Dorothy, my daughter-in-law, but dear as my own—I hope she will some day receive the happiness she deserves.

"Robert Westbrooke."

The letter fell from the hand of the man who read it, and he stood looking at it, as though it were a loathsome reptile. When he finally looked up, he spoke in a cold voice, lacking the emotion he had shone before, though his eyes held a strange glitter.

"Now, do you believe I killed him?"

"That is for you to decide," was the reply. "Morally, perhaps—though his own hand fired the shot."

"He trusted me," said Westbrooke. "He trusted me, and I failed him. He loved me as few fathers love their sons, and I proved a traitor, a snake in the grass."

His wife moved uneasily as though to protest at his airing family linen, but he met her glance with a peculiarly unpleasant smile.

"You know it's true, Dorothy," he said, "for you tried to curb me. It would have been better if I had died, then you would have had the happiness he speaks of—he knew just how you regarded me—and that——"

"Alfred!" she interrupted shrilly.

"I'm not blaming you! No self-respecting woman could love a cur like me, and Elliot is a man——"

"Please——" she moaned. "I am your wife, and I'll stand by you."

"I don't want you to," he cried in a sudden frenzy. "I want my punishment! I tell you I killed him. I didn't fire the shot, no! But it was her or I—and he did it! I wish I had! I wish I had!"

The officer placed a quieting hand on his shoulder, and for a moment Westbrooke was silent. He seemed to shake with inward convulsions.

"Suppose you explain what you mean," said Officer Blakely.

"He trusted me," reiterated Westbrooke.

"Yes, yes, I know," said Blakely. "Go on."

"He was ill a year ago, he went abroad, placing his entire business in my hands; we were partners, you know—my father's business was his father's before him and his father's before that; it was to have been mine," he groaned. "Well, I made ducks and drakes of the whole thing in less than a year. I squandered a fortune, and sent our business to hell!"

"Alfred!" cried his wife.

"I did, and you know it!" he said stubbornly. Now that he had started his confession he seemed to take an insane delight in lashing himself, in laying bare his innermost secrets. "I was always dissipated, that's why my wife loathes me and loves another man—a good, clean, worthy man who appreciates her goodness." The smile on his face as he made the sarcastic remark was not pleasant to see. "When the reins were placed in my hands I ran riot; there's another woman—you know her—she helped me slide down the greased pole to perdition. When father returned, restored to health, he found his business not only ruined, but the fortune of his colleagues involved as well; bankruptcy faced him, and a dishonorable name. I tried to brazen it, at first, and hide the disgraceful part from him. An honorable failure he could endure, and we started to reconstruct and eliminate all expenses. But the crash came to-day, as it was bound to come—he learned the truth, that the firm of Westbrooke & Westbrooke was branded as criminal defaulters! The disgrace was too much for him. He sent for me, and we had a stormy scene. He said so long as I lived he could never hold his head up again and face his fellowmen—that after what I had done my only recourse was to confess my share of the crime and clear his name from disgrace and then sink into oblivion. I was too stunned at first to realize what he meant, but when he opened the drawer of his desk and laid out two pistols before me, the horror of what he suggested sickened me so I crumpled up before him. He called me a coward as well as a thief and lashed me with every conceivable phrase; but I sat whimpering like the cur I was——"

"Alfred," whispered the tortured woman watching him. There was a world of pity in her voice, but as she leaned forward to touch him he drew back, his eyes blazing with fury.

"Save your tender words for Elliot when I'm gone! Don't I know you loathe me just as he did! I'm rotten clean through, too rotten to die even—when it was my only way out! God! I can hear him now, his clear, firm old voice as he said: 'You, my son! A scoundrel, a damn, lying, treacherous scoundrel——' and he gave me the alternative of using the pistol on myself or watching him take his own life!"

"No!" cried the wife.

"Say that again!" said the officer.

Westbrooke repeated his statement, and pointing to the revolver the detective held, said: "That is the one he used. As I stood craven, trembling, afraid to face death, he lifted the revolver, pulled the trigger, and dropped dead at my feet, just as——" Before the horrified spectators could interfere the man with a crescendo sob lifted the other revolver from the table on which the officer had laid it and followed his father's example. A shot rang out and the man fell a crumpled heap at the feet of the woman he had outraged and bitterly wronged.

Almost simultaneously the door opened to admit a kindly faced blond man who entered abruptly and hurried to the side of the swaying woman.

"Dorothy!" he cried, "something told me you were in trouble and needed me."

"Take me away, Elliot!" she moaned, stumbling toward him. "Take me away from this house of death."

A short story by one of the greatest writers in the world will appear in No. 22, out Oct. 1st.

IMITATION PEPPER AND TEA NEW GERMAN SUBSTITUTES

TO what extent Germany has succeeded in making substitutes for articles now unobtainable is indicated in an interesting article by a correspondent of the *Verdensgang*, a Christiania paper. Describing the recent Leipzig Fair, of which Germany made so much, the writer says:

A substitute for pepper is offered for sale which, judged only by its appearance, seems almost the same as real pepper. The color, odor, and taste have been surprisingly well imitated.

A tea is shown to which the name of "German tea" has been given. It is prepared from any one or a combination of a great variety of plants, from strawberry leaves to linden blossoms. It is said to taste very much like genuine tea, but even a half-dozen cups will not produce the stimulation caused by a single cup of real tea.

There are any number of substitutes for marmalades, it being a well-known fact that there is a scarcity of butter and jams to put on bread. Most of these marmalades are prepared from garden vegetables instead of from fruits, and with a minimum amount of sugar. The means by which they are made and the substances which enter into their manufacture are, however, secrets known only to the persons who produce them.

Substitute soap is offered for sale which is said to have been prepared from the oil in berries and from pumicestone. It lacks, however, the one main characteristic of soap, that of working up into a rich creamy lather, otherwise it is very good. Substitutes are also to be had for laundry blueing.

Substitute bicycle tires are sometimes made of two concentric iron rings with small springs between them. They are very serviceable on asphalt pavements, but are not as noiseless nor as easy riding as genuine rubber tires.

THE FATAL PRINTS

A Serial Detective Story

By WILLIAM S. HALL

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCOURAGED

"I KNEW I was in for it, so I let go of Tom and held on to my revolver.

"'Back! back!' I cried, 'or I'll fire!'

"'Shoot the scoundrel!' cried one in the crowd, and a shot was fired.

"The ball whizzed past my head and shattered the plastering on the wall behind me. That opened the game. I saw that they were determined to attack me. But that was just what I didn't intend they should do, and so I began popping away. I fired fast, and in less than ten seconds the six chambers of my revolver were empty. Every shot had told. They tried to get away, but the police grabbed 'em as they rushed up to the sidewalk. Not one of 'em got away.

"In ten minutes over a thousand eager, excited people had crowded around us. The police summoned help and an ambulance. It took a dozen officers to keep the crowd back as the wounded were brought out and carried away. The chief stood by me. The last one of the gang who had attacked me had been in prison for crime, and that let me out of any responsibility in the tragedy. But it stirred up the criminals' friends to a high pitch, and a number of them vowed to get square with me.

"I received several threatening letters in which my doom was pronounced in very emphatic terms, but I didn't scare worth a cent. Every letter was filed away in the chief's desk for future reference. My reputation as a dead shot and a 'bad man' was such, however, after that affair, that the criminals did not make themselves very officious in carrying out their threats until some time after.

"Strange to say, in none of the newspaper accounts of the affair was there a word said about the object of my visit to the shoe-shop. I was glad of that, for in that case the murderer I was in search of would have destroyed his shoes, and thus removed an important clue. Tom Hickox was carried to the hospital, and kept under a guard till his wound could be sufficiently healed to allow his removal to a cell. The row in the shoe-shop, however, caused me to change my mode of search. Instead of showing the fac-simile of the mark, and asking questions about it, I determined to put on a pair of shoes rather the worse for wear, and pretend to be in search of a competent workman to repair them.

"By that means I could ask to see specimens of work, and thus be able to ascertain if such a mark was used. If I did not see the mark I would pretend to be pleased with the specimens, bargain as to price, and go away, promising to send the shoes in that evening. The plan worked well. A score of shops were visited without any suspicion as to my mission being aroused. But several days passed without anything occuring to give me hope or even encouragement. Yet I was not discouraged, for I was sure I would stumble on the clue I was in search of sooner or later. Patience is one thing a good detective must have, boys, or he will get sadly left—patience and perseverance. I had plenty of both, and the chief said I would succeed if I held on to my grip. One evening I met a friend who was superintendent of a large shoe factory. We sat down to some good brandy and cigars, and talked over old times together. His name was Ned Crenshaw. He was a shrewd, sharp young fellow, who was bound to make his way in the world. I related to him, at his request, the particulars of the Creighton murder, during which conversation I told him of the young heiress to the old miser's wealth.

"'Great shoe-pegs, Ben!' he exclaimed. "I've a brilliant idea!'

"'What is it?' I asked.

"'That you introduce me to her,' he said.

"'But where's the brilliant idea?' I asked.

"'Why, I'll marry her.'

"'Oh!' and I saw where the brilliancy came in.

"We both laughed, and I promised I would do so if she would give me permission.

"'I hope to see her to-morrow evening,' I said, 'as I want to ask her some more questions in regard to the habits of her late uncle. By the way, Ned, you know all about shoes, do you not?'

"'You can just gamble that I do, Ben,' he replied. 'The man who knew more than I did about the business died of too much knowledge.'

"'Can I trust you with a secret?'

"'You can, old fellow.'

"'Then I want you to tell me if you ever saw such a stamp on the bottom of a pair of shoes as this thing would make,' and I handed him the metal stamp the chief had caused to be made for me from the cast of the footprint in the mortar.

"Ned took the stamp and examined it critically for several minutes. Then he shook his head.

"'No,' he said. 'I never did. Where did you get this?'

"I gave him the history of it. He was deeply interested.

"'Ben,' he said, 'I want to see that print in the mortar just as you found it.'

"'You can see it.'

"'When?'

"To-morrow,' I replied.

"'At what hour?'

"'Any time convenient to you.'

"'At noon, then—my lunch time, when I have an hour to myself.'

"'Very well. I will meet you at head-quarters—you come there.'

"'I'll be there,' he said.

"The next day he came promptly on time, and I conducted him into the private office of the chief. There I showed him the print of the shoe in the mortar.

"'It was a No. 7 shoe,' he said, the moment he looked at it.

"'Are you sure of that?' I asked.

"'Yes.'

"Then he looked at the mark on which I had been depending so much as a clue to the old miser's murderer. Something about it attracted his attention.

"He took it, and moved over to the window where the rays of sunshine could fall full upon it.

"'Get me a magnifying-glass,' he said, after a few moments of silence.

"The chief had one in his desk. I handed it to him, and he made a minute inspection of the mark with it.

"'I say, Ben,' he said, 'it was not made with a stamp at all.'

"'The devil!' I gasped. 'Have I been throwing all my time and labor away for nothing?'

"'Oh, no. You have learned a good deal in that time,' and he smiled as he spoke.

"'What in super-heated blazes do you mean?' I demanded.

"'I mean that this mark was made by two dull punches and a small screw-driver, or something like it.'

"Boys, I came near going down on the floor in a dead faint, I was so amazed.

"'Go on,' said I, hoarsely, 'and do your worst.'

"'The truth is,' he said, 'some young apprentice, working in the shop where the shoes were half-soled, probably put this on during an idle time, just to be doing something. No regular workman would bother to do it. You see, the larger ring was stamped first with punch and mallet. Then a smaller punch was used in like manner to make the inner ring or circle. After that he took up a small screw-driver, or a dull cold-chisel, and made the four straight bars that connects the rings like spokes in a wheel.'

"Utterly overcome by the revelation, I glanced at Ned, and asked:

"'How in thunder do you know all that?'

"'By what I see here,' he said, pointing to the mark. 'I can detect the dull edge of the punch in both rings. The outer circle was made first, as the slight bulge caused by the stamping of the inner one is perceptible in the large one. Here, see for yourself,' and he handed me the magnifying-glass to look on whilst he pointed out the objects with the point of his knife. I was forced to give it up, but the idea almost made me sick.

"'Then it's no use inquiring among the cobblers?' I said.

"'I don't say that,' he replied. 'You may run across the "cub" who made the mark, but there are a thousand chances that you will not find him.'

"After some further talk Ned went away, and I was in a frame of mind not far from distracting.

"'What do you think of it, chief?' I asked, turning to the head of the force.

"'I think your friend was right,' was the reply.

"It made me groan, boys. My only clue was whittled down to such a small chip that the magnifying-glass was almost necessary to see it.

"You've heard about the fun of looking for a needle in a haystack? Well, that was nothing to the fun I was now having. I was constantly haunted with the fear of failure, and knew how wise the older detectives would look and sneer whenever the case was mentioned. It made me blue, and I went to my quarters to lie down and think over it. How was I ever to find out who owned that shoe? If I found the one who made the mark, how was I to get the wearer of it? These and a score of other questions kept running through my head until I was almost tempted to hunt up Ned Crenshaw and kick him all around the city for bursting up my clue. It was a sleepless night for me, you may well believe; but ere I arose from my bed the next morning I had fully made up my mind to continue my search among the cobblers.

"'It's almost against hope and reason,' I muttered to myself, 'but it's my only grip.'

"But on that day I met with an incident that electrified and awoke all the enthusiasm of the detective in me. Late in the afternoon I went over into a little shop on the west side. The shoemaker had gone out to collect a bill, and buy a little stock for work on hand, leaving his wife and several children in charge.

"'Is the shoemaker in?' I asked of the cobbler's wife.

"'No, sir,' she replied; 'but he will be in soon. Do you wish to have any work done?'

"'Yes,' I answered.

"'Can you wait a little while, sir? He will be in soon.'

"That was just what I wanted. I said I would wait, and sat down with the intention of examining the specimens of work, and thus satisfy myself as to whether such a mark as I was in search of was ever used in that shop. I picked up a pair of shoes which had recently been half-soled and examined them.

"Is this a sample of your husband's work, ma'am?' I asked.

"'Yes, sir.'

"'It is very good work,' I remarked, laying them down and looking at a pair of boots.

"'His customers are all well pleased with his work, sir,' she said, with an air of pride.

"'I should think they ought to be, if these are fair samples of what he can do.'

"Then, as I did not discover any signs of the mark I was looking for, I turned my attention to the bench where lay all the tools used by shoe-makers, hoping to find the punches Ned Crenshaw had spoken about so confidently. After looking the bench over, I became satisfied that no such tools were on it. Nor could I, by any process of reasoning, see what use a shoe-maker had for such tools anyway. At last I was about to excuse myself to Madam Cobbler, by saying that I couldn't wait any longer, when a young girl, some seventeen or eighteen years old, came in. She was neatly and plainly dressed, but had a jaunty air about her that somewhat jarred the idea of modesty. But she was pretty and plump, with sparkling black eyes, rosy cheeks, and pouting lips. I soon discovered that she was the shoe-maker's daughter, who frequently aided him in the finer work on ladies' shoes, stitching in the lining and running the sewing-machine. The mother informed her that I was waiting for her father to return, to have some work done. The daughter had an eye to business. She looked me over from head to foot, saw that I was a good-looking man, and at once began a rattling conversation with me. She was a good talker, and far from being a fool. But I could see that she was a girl who was fond of company, and would go in for fun in any shape. I was pleased with her, and never noticed that she kept me there over an hour with her prattle.

"'I am sorry my father keeps you waiting so long, sir,' she finally said, after a lull in the conversation. 'He will be in soon, I hope.'

"'I fear I will have to call again,' I said, rising to leave, 'as I have overstayed my time already.'

"'If you will leave your address, sir, father will send for your shoes when he comes in, and save you the trouble of coming back.'

"'Thanks; it will be no trouble for me to call again,' I said.

"'Have you noticed some of father's best work, sir?' she asked.

"'Yes, he is a fine workman,' I answered. 'But the finest work I ever saw was done on a pair of shoes which had a peculiar mark on them.'

"'What kind of a mark was it?' she asked, looking much interested.

"Simply because she was a pretty girl I took a pencil and paper and made a drawing of the mark for her to see.

"'Why, goodness gracious,' she exclaimed, 'that's Billy's mark!'

"I tell you, boys, I came near jumping out of my skin when I heard her.

"'Billy who?' I asked.

"'Why, Billy Graham! He used to work for father. He left here about a month ago. There's the bench he worked on over there under that side of leather,' and she pointed toward a corner where, under a side of sole-leather, the legs of another bench could be seen.

"'Are you sure of that?' I asked.

"'Yes, sir. I've seen him do it, often. He was up to all kinds of tricks. He was a handsome rascal, and everybody liked him. But he wasn't steady."

CHAPTER SIX

A BEAUTIFUL ASSISTANT DETECTIVE

"IT was a desperate effort for me to keep the girl from seeing my excitement.' I don't know when I ever made such a hard pull on my countenance. But I kept my face, and turning to the girl, coolly asked:

"'How did he make the mark? What kind of a tool did he use?'

"'Oh, I'll show you,' she said, running over to the corner and pulling the side of leather away. 'Billy was a harness-maker as well as a shoemaker. When business in one line was dull he worked at the other. He went away one night and never came back again, and so his tools are here yet.'

"While she was rattling away with her tongue, her little plump hands were busy among the tools on the deserted bench.

"'Here they are,' she said, coming toward me with three little bits of iron in her hand. 'I'll show you how he did it,' and taking up a piece of sole-leather, laid it down on a corner of the sewing machine, seized a hammer and struck the larger of the two punches. It made a ring dented in the grain of the leather about seven-eighths of an inch in diameter.

"Then the other punch, a much smaller one, was taken up and a ring was made inside the large one. A small cold-chisel was then used in making the connecting bars, and there was the mark on leather before me.

"'That's the way he did it,' she said, 'and I used to laugh at him for it. He would laugh, too, and threaten to mark me so as to be able to claim me, as if I would ever get lost'; and she laughed a sweet, silvery laugh, that hadn't a particle of Fifth avenue affectation in it.

"'That's very simple,' I remarked.

"'Yes, indeed.'

"'Did he use that on every shoe or boot he repaired?'

"'Oh, no, sir. When he was crowded with work he wouldn't stop to do that.'

"'Did you ever know anybody else to use such a mark?'

"'No, sir. It was only Billy's foolishness.'

"'Was he a very fine workman?'

"'Father did not think he was, but he was better than the average. He was a good finisher. I guess he put the mark you saw on a pair of shoes that father had repaired and given to him to finish off.'

"'Very likely,' I said. 'So I will be glad to have your father do my work, and——'

"'Here's father now,' she said, interrupting me, as a man entered the shop.

"The result was I had the shoemaker measure me for a pair of fine boots, paying him a deposit of five dollars on the order. When I went to leave, the girl was standing at the door, as if to see me off. I wanted to ask her a few questions, as you may well know, but dared not arouse suspicion by doing so. At the door, however, I said to her:

"'You have done me a service for which I thank you very much, miss. Will you have a plate of ice-cream with me over the way, as I see an ice-cream sign over there?'

"She laughed.

"'Did you ever hear a girl refuse ice-cream?' she asked.

"'Yes, once,' I replied.

"'Why, how was that?' she asked, adjusting her hat and going out with me.

"'It was a girl who had already gotten away with four plates,' I said, 'and she refused another.'

"'Oh, yes—she was excusable,' and her merry, silvery laugh showed that she was a very jolly, light-hearted girl.

"When we entered the ice-creamery, which was a very ordinary one, I saw that she was well known to the proprietor, who seemed to know the flavor she most liked. Whilst disposing of the ice-cream we managed to get pretty well acquainted.

"'Do you like to go to theaters?' I asked.

"'Yes, indeed I do,' she answered, with her pretty mouth full of ice-cream.

"'Would you like to go with me some evening?'

"'Do you wish me to?' she asked.

"'Yes, of course I do.'

"'Then I'll go.'

"'When?'

"'To-morrow evening."

"'Thanks. I will call for you.'

"She said her name was Tillie Truxton, and I gave her mine—Ben Croly. I went away to ponder over the best way to get at the facts that I was sure lay at the bottom of what I had stumbled upon. Tillie Truxton was waiting for me when I called, dressed as neatly and tastefully as any rich man's daughter could have been. I tell you I was not ashamed to be seen with her or any one like her. Of course we had ice-cream after the performance, and it was then I brought up the subject of the mark on the shoes, by saying to her:

"'Tillie, when my boots are done, do me the favor to put Billy Graham's stamp on them with your own hand.'

"'She laughed and asked why I wanted her to do that.'

"'Because I don't think they would hurt my corns if you did,' I replied, at which she again laughed, and said she would.

"'By the way,' said I, 'you told me that Graham ran away and never came back, did you not?'

"'I didn't say he ran away. He went out one evening after a day's work and never came back.'

"'And you never heard from him again in no way?'

"'No, we never did.'

"'What do you suppose became of him?'

"'I have no idea.'

"'Did you ever suspect that some foul play had taken place with him?'

"'Why, no. Billy was a wild, reckless, unsteady kind of a fellow, so we never thought anything had happened to him, other than a queer notion to do as he did.'

"'Have you no idea what caused him to go off that way?'

"'I may, but I don't know. I think a girl friend of mine was about to have him arrested for breach of promise, and that may have caused him to leave.'

"'Ah! That's the secret,' I said. 'Billy was a sad dog, I guess, and you girls led him a lively dance.'

"'They all said he was a rascal, but I never did think him as bad as they said he was.'

"'Did he mark his own shoes with that trade-mark of his?'

"'I really don't know.'

"'What number of shoes did he wear?'

"She gave me a look of surprise, and asked:

"'Why do you ask that? What a question!'

"'I will tell you why, when you answer the question.'

"'I think he wore a number seven shoe. But what a strange question, Mr. Croly!'

"'Yes, it is very strange, and I'll tell you now why I asked you about it. A man was found drowned some weeks ago, with a pair of number seven shoes on his feet, marked with that stamp you made for me yesterday.'

"'Good heavens!' she gasped, turning deathly pale. 'Was he a young man?'

"'Yes.' And she looked sicker than ever. 'But as we could find no letter, or memoranda that gave any clue to his identity, I have been set to work to find out who he was. That's why I have been going around looking for a shoemaker who could recognize that mark.'

"Tillie was amazed—dumbfounded—and for several minutes made no reply. She glanced at me, though, like one in a dream.

"'Did he have a mustache?' she asked.

"'No.'

"'Blue eyes?'

"'Yes.'

"'Large teeth?'

"'Yes.'

"'Light hair?'

"'No, rather dark—quite dark, I may say.'

"She drew a breath of relief.

"'Then it was not him,' she said. 'Billy's hair was very light. He had blue eyes, though, and large teeth, and was about two inches shorter than you are.'

"'That tallies precisely with the unknown dead man,' I answered, 'except in regard to the hair.'

"That left her in considerable doubt, and I could detect a look of distress in her face.

"'I hope, for your sake, that it is not your friend,' I said.

"'Oh, he is nothing to me,' she said quickly, 'but it shocks me to hear of the death of any one I knew.'

"'Yes, yes; quite natural,' I said. 'But as I have been deputed to trace out who the man was, I will hope that you will give me all the information in your power that you think might be of use to me in the search.'

"'Yes, I will, but I—I—do hope it is not Billy.'

"'So do I. But the description you give of him tallies so much with that of the drowned man that I am afraid he is your friend.'

"'Oh, I hope not. It's perfectly awful,' and she displayed much more feeling that I had given her credit of having.

"'Yes, indeed. We can satisfy ourselves, though, by hunting up Billy, or at least tracing him as far as we can.'

"'But how can we do that? I have no idea where he went when he left here.'

"'Don't you know some of his friends?' I asked.

"'Yes, several of them. But they don't know any more than I do of his whereabouts.'

"'Some of them may,' I suggested. 'At least it's the part of wisdom to follow up every clue we can. Come, now, brace up and join me in the search. Turn detective, and enjoy the romance of unraveling the fate of one of your friends.'

The idea took.

"She was charmed at it, and said:

"'Of course I will.'

"'That's right. Now give me the names of some of his friends, and maybe we can trace him up to his last place.'

"She thereupon gave me the names of several young men who knew Graham; also two young girls who were more or less interested in him. I congratulated myself on having made a long leap in the direction of my goal, and felt very much like hugging Tillie for so complacently falling into the trap prepared for her. By this time we had finished the plates of ice-cream, and were ready to go. I saw her home, snatched a kiss from her at the door, and returned to my quarters in a really happy frame of mind.

"'Billy Graham,' I said to myself, 'you may or may not be the game I am after; but you wear a number seven shoe, and have the telltale stamp on the bottom of them. I'll hunt you up and see what you amount to, anyhow.'

(*To be continued*)

ALL ABOUT "HUMBUG"

MANY explanations of the origin of this word have been offered, but the following seems one of the most reliable: Among the many issues of base coin which from time to time were made in Ireland there was none to be compared in worthlessness to that made by James II at the Dublin mint. It was composed of anything on which he could lay his hands, such as lead, pewter, copper and brass, and so low was the intrinsic value of it that 20 shillings of it were only worth two-pence sterling.

William III, a few days after the Battle of the Boyne, ordered that the crown piece and the half-crown should be taken at one penny and one-half penny, respectively. The soft, mixed metal of which that worthless coin was composed was known among the Irish as Uim bog, pronounced as combug—*i. e.*, soft copper, worthless money; and in the course of their dealings the modern use of the word "humbug" took its rise, as in the phrase, "That's a piece of uimbog," "Don't think to pass off your uimbog on me."

Hence, says the *Baltimore American*, the word "humbug" came to be applied to anything that had a specious appearance, but which was in reality spurious. It is curious to note that the very opposite of "humbug"—*i. e.*, false metals—is the word "sterling," which is also taken from a term applied to the "true" coinage of Great Britain, as "sterling" coin, "sterling" worth, etc.

CURRENT NEWS

NEEDLE FATAL DIET FOR COW

F. H. Houseknecht, of Sybertsville, Pa., who was offered $120 for a Jersey cow recently, mourns his loss. The animal died the other day and a veterinary surgeon found a knitting needle in its heart.

TOOK THE CHURCH BELLS

Of the Province of Brandenburg's 4,300 church bells, 2,190 have been taken by the German army authorities for gun metal. Some which have gained a respite for artistic and historical reasons date from the early half of the thirteenth century.

POWERFUL WIRELESS STATION FOR ARGENTINE

It is announced that the Marconi Company will build the largest wireless station in the world near Buenos Aires. The contract for the work has just been closed. The power of the new station will be 11,000 kilowatts, and three towers will be erected, each the size of the Eiffel Tower.

DENMARK RESORTS TO PEAT

Denmark has been long dependent upon importation of coal and oil for fuel supply, but since the war has resorted to peat beds, its only natural supply. As peat has been found of value both for industrial use and household heating, its use as fuel will probably be continued after the war.

AGED TREE STILL BEARS

On the farm of Grant Farmer on Fords Prairie, Wash., is a cherry tree that was planted eighty-four years ago, when General Grant was a lieutenant stationed at Fort Vancouver. The tree still bears fruit. It has a spread of sixty-five feet and its trunk is ten feet eleven inches in circumference.

BABY FALLS THREE STORIES; IS UNHURT

Gordon Babinger of Pittsburgh, Pa., six-months-old child, fell from a third-story window on to a concrete sidewalk, and, with the exception of a few minor bruises, escaped unscathed. The mother and father were playing with the baby near the open window when the father accidentally dropped him.

ANCIENT DENTISTRY

In the former villa of Pope Julius III., in Rome, which is now used as an Etruscan museum, there is exhibited an excellent specimen of a gold dental bridge in proper position in a skull taken from an Etruscan tomb in Civita Castellana, a town in Etruria, situated upon the proposed site of Veji. The latter town was utterly destroyed before the time of Christ, so a conservative estimate would put the age of this dental bridge at over 2,000 years.

THE APPENDIX IN ANIMALS

The Australian wombat, a marsupial, shares with man and some of the higher apes the distinction of being the only animal to possess a vermiform appendix. Curiously enough the appendix has in this animal of a very ancient type made further progress towards elimination than it has in man. In a collection of specimens of the appendix of the wombat made by Dr. W. C. Mackenzie of Melbourne, the appendix can be seen degenerating till it almost reaches the vanishing point.

TRANS-ANDEAN RAILROAD

One of the most remarkable engineering projects of the world was completed thirty-four years ago when the first train ran over the railroad between Buenos Ayres, Argentina, and Valparaiso, Chile. The line traverses the great mountain chain of the Andes and passes over chasms and gorges of incredible depth. So deep are the chasms that passengers have been known to become absolutely terror-stricken while crossing over them. The route was shortened several years ago and made less dangerous to travelers by the construction of tunnels.

HEART ON WRONG SIDE

Another freak of nature was uncovered recently when Dr. John H. Bailey, Medical Director of Local Board No. 22, Philadelphia, Pa., refused to accept George W. Nicholson for the army because his heart was on the wrong side, even though it was on his right. Nicholson is thirty years old and pleaded desperately to go.

Some months ago he tried to enlist but was turned down because he was under weight, his examiners being unaware of the cardiac peculiarities. When he was called for examination before the draft board Doctor Bailey made the discovery of the true location of his heart.

ON THE ROAD TO WEALTH

William Tremere, Jr., of Willmore, Jessamine County, is a thrifty lad of twelve years. He raised a lot of hogs, upon his father's farm which he has recently sold for $385. He has invested $300 of that amount in War Savings Stamps and with the $85 remaining he has bought calves. These he will feed until fall, then put them upon the market, and with the proceeds buy more stamps. The young man is a grandson of the late J. W. Tremere, of Frankfort, Ky., and a great-nephew of the poet, Colonel Theodore O'Hara.

ALASKANS ISOLATED

After years of service on the Alaska peninsular route west of Seward, the steamer *Dora* will be withdrawn by the Alaska Steamship Company after her August voyage to the mouth of the Nushagak River, Behring Sea. The *Dora* will be brought to Seattle and sold.

As a result of this move many isolated settlements on the Alaskan coast west from Seward will be without freight, passenger and mail service the year round unless the government or some private company opens a new steamer service. War-time conditions and heavy losses in revenue caused abandonment of the *Dora's* route.

COAL DEPOSITS IN GREECE

The discovery of large deposits of lignite coal of superior quality a few miles north of Ekaterina and across the head of the Gulf of Salonika, from the city of Salonica, may be of great value in the industrial development of Greece. That country has had to import fuel for manufacturing purposes, as lignite mined on the island of Euboca was of inferior quality. As to the new deposits, engineers have traced so far a mass approximating 700,000 tons in a small area of the coal territory. Three veins, each varying from twelve to eighteen inches in thickness, have been uncovered.

GOLD IN BUTTONS

At least one American soldier will have real American gold on his person with which to make purchases that will sustain life if he is captured by the Germans. Bert Martin of Salt Lake City, who is in Seattle, Wash., tells the story, but refuses to give the boy's name.

Martin says the boy's mother sewed $2.50 gold pieces in each button of the young man's sweater vest. She managed to get ten of these money loaded buttons on the vest and then replaced the buttons on the shirt.

In all the mother concealed $55 in the buttons and additional gold pieces in other parts of his clothing.

RAT LABORATORY'S BIG HIT

Dr. E. V. McCollum, head of the Department of Chemistry of the School of Hygiene and Public Health of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, has a laboratory of rats. The rodents play significant part in Doctor McCollum's studies on nutrition, a matter of great importance at the present time. The rat laboratory consists of tier after tier of cages, each the comfortable and scientifically clean home of a family of rodents.

Doctor McCollum stated that as a result of eleven years' observation he had reached the conclusion that, so far as chemical properties are concerned, the food requirements of all species of animals, including man, were the same.

RAISES ALFALFA IN VOLCANIC ASHES

In the memorable ash flow from Mount Lassen, Cal., on May 20, 1915, the farm of Charles Hawkins, which is the furthest up Hat Creek, was buried in ashy mud varying in depth from twelve to twenty-eight and thirty inches. Thirty acres of alfalfa were buried out of sight. Half of this meadow, where the mud was twelve inches deep, was not destroyed.

In time next season the buried alfalfa found its way to the surface and sent out new roots. Hawkins cut a good crop of alfalfa there the second year. He ploughed the other fifteen acres, where his meadow was buried over a foot deep, and reseeded it. Hawkins says that the best alfalfa crop in the valley will be harvested this summer from that portion of his meadow that was buried the deepest in volcanic ashes.

RIVER EATS FARM

The Missouri River, which has been cutting heavily above Yankton, S. D., for two years past, has been doing swift work of late.

A mile of an old used road, once the Yankton and Norfolk Railroad grade, has gone into the river. The fine farm of A. P. Johnson, 170 acres, is all gone but three acres. Henry Buckhart has moved because sixty acres he farmed is all washed away. Others are now moving, among them Dave Wallace, whose farm is in the city limits, just below the chalk bluffs that stand as a rampart for the city against the Missouri's further ravages. It now appears as if the Missouri would soon finish all the bottom land adjacent to the city on the south, bringing the stream close to Yankton once more, where it used to be forty years ago.

ENLISTING ANTS TO FIGHT COOTIES

A correspondent signing himself "A Spanish War Veteran," writing to the New York *Sun*, suggests that cooties in the army may be got rid of by placing clothing harboring the vermin on an ant hill, when the ants will not only quickly dispose of the adult cooties, but the youthful nits also. This, he says, was done by our troops in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. Granted that there are ant hills in France where the experiment might be tried, it would also be necessary that men troubled with the pests whose hair was not closely clipped rest their heads on ant hills, in order to co-operate with the patriotic ants and give those industrious insects a chance to show what they could do in that direction against the common enemy.

USE MUSIC TO LURE SEALS

Canned music to lure seals to their death is the experiment made this summer by deputies of the State Fish Commission's office of Washington.

The seal herd hunter anchors his rowboat near a rookery or salmon trap, puts on a record, and when the seals gather around to enjoy the concert the deputy with his rifle picks off the audience.

Fishermen have found the hair seal is very inquisitive, with a keen sense of hearing. When the seal hears a strange sound curiosity prompts him to investigate. Indians have long known this characteristic of the seal and have lured it within striking distance with a spear by using a sort of whistle which has a peculiar attraction for the animals.

BEE FARMS

Articles of incorporation of the Western Bee Farms Corporation, capitalized at $100,000, have been filed in San Francisco. The object of the corporation, it is said, is to make California the leading honey producing State in the Union, and to help conserve the supply of sugar by providing honey as a substitute. The corporation expects to establish a string of bee farms from Santa Cruz to San Diego. More than 15,000 stands of bees will be maintained, and the estimated yearly production of honey will be 1,500,000 pounds.

Before the war honey sold at four cents a pound. Now it is worth twenty-one cents. The incorporators are E. A. Potter, P. C. R. Johnson of Alameda and Edward R. Solinsky of Berkeley.

A VALUABLE POT

An iron pot containing $115,000 in gold coins has been unearthed in an abandoned well on the Isaac Shaffer farm in Lawrence County, near Hillsville, Pa., it became known the other day.

Employees of a limestone company were blasting, and coming to the well let off a charge which sent a shower of gold coins skyward. The story of the burying of the treasure thirty years ago came to light with its discovery.

In 1888 Isaac Shaffer, a rich cattle buyer, died. Stricken by apoplexy, he managed to mumble "Gold," motioned toward his farm and fell dead. During the last thirty years his heirs have explored the farm many times hoping to find the treasure. The gold has been deposited in a New Castle, Pa., bank. Heirs of Shaffer have claimed the treasure.

WHY DO WE GET "TIRED"?

Every activity of our body registers itself on the brain. When we move an arm or leg a great many times we soon feel tired. Every time you move your arm the movement is registered in the brain, and after a number of these movements are registered the tired feeling in the arm appears.

It is said that every movement of any part of the body really produces defective cells and that these accumulate in the blood. When these reach a certain number the tired feeling takes possession of us, and when we rest, the blood, under the guidance of the brain, goes to work and rebuilds these defective cells. We know that a change takes place in the blood when we become tired because, if you take some of the blood from an animal that shows unmistakable signs of fatigue and inject it into an animal that shows no tired feeling at all, the second animal will begin to show signs of fatigue even though it is not active at all.

THE FIRST GOLD FILLING FOR TEETH

The first dentist to fill the nerve cavity with gold was Edward Maynard, who was born in Madison, N. J., 105 years ago. Maynard was also the inventor of many of the instruments now used in dental surgery. He had a varied career. His ambition was to become a soldier, and he was appointed to the West Point Military Academy, but resigned because of ill health. In 1835 he graduated in dental surgery and settled in Washington, where he practiced for fifty-five years. While Doctor Maynard was experimenting with improved fillings for teeth and inventing new appliances, Dr. William T. C. Morton, a Boston dentist, robbed surgery of much of its horror by introducing the use of ether in operations. This was in 1844, a few years after the first dental college in America was founded in Baltimore. Doctor Maynard was also the inventor of the breech-loading Maynard rifle patented in 1851, which was the forerunner of the modern rifle. He died in Washington in 1891.

A NEW CHINESE ALPHABET

Chinese scholars who are dissatisfied with the ideographic characters in which their language has always been written have set out to form an alphabet which they hope to see gradually adopted by their countrymen.

It was Chow Hi Chu, secretary of the Chinese Legation at Rome, assisted by Wan and Chou, sub-secretaries, and Signor Rivetta, professor of Chinese and Japanese at the Oriental Institute at Naples, who began the project.

To represent exactly all the sounds of the Chinese language it was necessary to draw upon almost all existing alphabets. The alphabet composed in the present case consists of forty-two characters, of which twenty-three are vowels and nineteen are consonants. Of the vowels four are taken from the Greek, four from the Russian, five from the Latin and one from the Chinese. Of the nine others two are what are called "modified" or "prolonged" and seven are reversed.

Of the consonants fourteen are taken from the Latin, three from the Russian and two from the Greek.

PNEUMATIC CORD TIRES

A trip over the Lincoln Highway from New York to Philadelphia provides many surprises to touring motorists in the multiplicity of big rubber-tired freighters that ply constantly between these two cities, hauling every conceivable kind of merchandise. Motor trucking companies are springing up almost daily, offering efficient service, which not only helps to relieve the railroads of a portion of their heavy burden, but also offers quicker transportation in that all terminal delays, so common to railroads, are avoided. At first these heavy duty trucks were confined to the solid tired class, but the advantages of big corn tires, as demonstrated by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company on its fleet of trucks operating between Akron, O., and Boston, Mass., have led many truck owners to equip their freighters with pneumatic tires. The great reduction in wear and tear on the trucks and the greater speed permitted are among the advantages that are to be gained.

VANITY GAVE AUGUST THIRTY-ONE DAYS

The original name of August was Sextilis, as the sixth month, and it consisted of twenty-nine days until Julius Cæsar reformed the calendar and gave it an extra day. When Augustus ascended the imperial throne of Rome he changed the name of the month to August, in honor of himself. The preceding month, Quintilis, had been changed to July in honor of Julius Cæsar, and the Senate thought to propitiate Emperor Augustus by permitting him to claim a similar honor.

Augustus, who held rather a high opinion of himself, was not satisfied, however; the month of Julius had thirty-one days, while his own month had but thirty. This was intolerable to his vanity, so he proceeded to filch a day from poor old February and add it to the month of August. Ever since then all nations deriving their civilization from the Romans have commemorated the name and fame and vanity of Augustus in their calendars. Augustus was not born in August, but he chose that month to bear his name because it was in Sextilis that his greatest good fortune had happened.

FAMOUS JAPANESE TEMPLE GARDEN

The Golden Temple, one of the most famous of Japanese shrines, is surrounded by a garden which has been growing for centuries. So artistically has his work been done that the artifices of the gardener are not very pronounced, with the noticeable exceptions of the great old pine tree, which grows in a court surrounded on three sides by monastery buildings.

It is trained in the shape of a junk, hull, mast and sail being reproduced. For centuries the patient priests have bent, pruned, pried, tied and propped up the limbs and twigs of this tree.

In the center of the garden is a lake with pine-clad shores and pine-covered islets. Each tree in a Japanese garden has its special landscape name, according to its position and purpose in the combination. Pines are always used for a framework in working out a foliage design. It is symbolical of unflinching purpose, and its spiny leaves are supposed to be endowed with the power of driving demons away.

The pavilion is a three-storied, unpainted wooden building, with projecting roofs and galleries. There are no nails visible, its beams and posts being jointed or fastened with wooden pegs.

The temple derives its name from the room in the third story, whose walls and ceiling and floor in halcyon days were coated with gold; even the frames of the sliding screens, the railing of the balcony and the small projecting rafters which form the roof of the balcony, were, as careful examination shows, covered with a lacquer of the precious metal. On top of the roof stands a bronze phœnix, or Ho-wo bird, about three feet high, with uplifted wings.

IRON TURNED TO COPPER

Not so very long ago a curious find was made in one of the copper mines at El Cobre, Cuba. These mines, once among the richest in the world, were abandoned for a long time on account of the insurrections in Cuba against the Spanish rule. In 1868 the coal supply was cut off by the insurgents, and consequently pumping the mines became impossible and they were soon filled with water.

After the Spanish war an American company bought the mines and proceeded to pump out the water. In one of the shafts thus made accessible was found what once represented an iron pick-ax, as well as some crow-bars. The metal in these implements had, it is said, turned to copper. Extraordinary as this may appear, it can be scientifically explained.

The water, filtering through the rock and the copper ore veins, dissolved some of the copper, the solution containing sulphur of copper. As soon as the sulphuric acid in this solution touched the iron it dissolved that metal and deposited copper in its place, for sulphuric acid has a greater affinity for iron than for copper. In the process certain impurities which had existed in the iron were left behind undisturbed.

The wooden handle of the pick was in good condition. The metal was porous and irregular in shape, but the general outline preserved the form of the pick somewhat enlarged in size.

GAS MASKS FOR HORSES

The Gas Defense Service of the Army is now manufacturing about 5,000 horse gas masks per day, the Committee on Public Information announces. These are being sent to France, and it is expected that within a short time every horse connected with the A. E. F. will be equipped. The new masks have a defensive value considerably greater than any known type. They can be made more quickly, are more economical and more efficient. They are odorless after being impregnated with chemicals to neutralize all known gases that would affect horses. So far as is known this can be said of no other mask now being used by any of the enemy armies. A distinct advantage is that the masks can be placed securely on the heads of horses which are not wearing harness. This additional feature will result in the saving of many horses, as it frequently has happened that horses were overcome by gas because they were not wearing harness to which the masks could be attached when a gas attack came. The Gas Defense Service has a completely equipped factory for the manufacture of the masks. In less than three weeks a building was selected and the factory was producing them. The introduction of riveting machinery has done away with the heavy hand sewing of the frame which supports the masks on the faces of the horses. The mask is so constructed that no metal or chemically impregnated parts can chafe the horse.

BATTERED HULKS OF CERVERA'S FLEET

July 3 was the twentieth anniversary of one of the most glorious days in American naval history. On July 3, 1898, columns of black smoke appeared in the Harbor of Santiago and soon a line of armored ships appeared, headed at full speed for the open sea. Admiral Cervera was attempting to run the blockade. But the American fleet was on the alert and in a short time the Cuban Coast was dotted with the burning hulks of the Spanish ships. The wrecks of two of them may still be seen near the village of Juan Gonzales.

Two rusty and battered masses rise out of the sea, not far from shore; one all that is left of Admiral Cervera's flagship *Viscaya* and the other the remains of the cruiser *Almirante Oquendo*. The latter reached much shallower water and a large part of her shows above the sea. The *Viscaya*, battered to pieces, bears little resemblance to what was once one of the finest vessels of the Spanish navy. On several occasions the project of raising the wrecks has been suggested, but abandoned, as the vessels are of no value except as scrap iron.

One of the *Viscaya's* turrets still rises above the sea, and from it a gun points menacingly upward toward the sky. The portion above the water of both ships is encrusted with barnacles and rusted by the weather. The *Almirante Oquendo* was beached near Juan Gonzales, while the *Viscaya* managed to get about twice as far away before turning in toward the shore. In consequence the two hulks are about seven miles apart.

NEWEST THINGS

The United States produces about 88 per cent. of the world's oysters.

Into the head of a new golf club can be inserted lead plugs to adjust its weight and balance.

Oculists have found that a peculiar form of eye strain is due to persons reading while lying down.

Electrical apparatus for permanently curling women's hair has been invented by a foreign scientist.

Norwegian government experimenters have succeeded in producing a bread containing 20 per cent. of fish.

A miniature cigar every three seconds is the capacity of a machine that makes them in a New York plant.

Only about five per cent. of the lower animals are defective at birth, a much lower ratio than among human beings.

To convert an ordinary bicycle into a motorcycle a motor driven wheel to replace its front wheel has been patented.

Danish inventors have perfected motors that are claimed to work well with peat gas as fuel instead of benzine or gasoline.

Because insects collect at the upper end of screen doors an inventor has brought out one in two sections, permitting children to enter through the lower section without admitting insects to a house.

On the shank of a new fish hook are prongs to hold live bait with a minimum of injury.

A British scientist has invented a microscope that will measure a millionth of an inch.

That he can send pictures by wire in their natural colors is claimed by an Italian scientist.

Spring-controlled arms engage the sides of a pocket and prevent a new pocketbook being stolen.

Automobile bodies made experimentally of concrete reinforced with steel wires are claimed to be stronger and lighter than wooden ones.

For reading programmes in dark theaters an Englishman has patented a dry battery electric light that is mounted in an opera-glass case.

Italian experimenters believe that tomatoes grown in vineyards kill or lessen the number of insects that cause phylloxera in grapevines.

Screws that will stay in place in woodwork have been invented with an opening from the slot to one side through which a tiny pin is driven.

A one-man gasoline driven machine has been invented to deliver up to 1,000 hammer blows a minute to freshly laid concrete road foundations to give them even density.

To You, Miss or Mrs., About Your Hair

This is a plain talk of real importance to you because it is absolutely honest and the information is genuine.

You have been losing your hair. It comes out on the comb or brush. The steady loss, as well as the fact that your hair is becoming **thinner and weaker,** is worrying you.

You have tried different lotions, tonics, washes, etc., that were recommended or which you saw advertised. None of these have done you any good. They were not the right remedy for your hair.

Well, dear Madam, here is a message of good cheer. It comes from a man.

Years ago when I was almost entirely bald I came across an old Cherokee Indian who induced me to try his recipe for growing hair. He told me that the principle of this formula was used by all Indians, male and female, wherever they found a weed of it.

You know that Indian women (and men too) have long, beautiful hair.

So I tried the recipe. The compound was an ointment for the scalp. It had a bad odor and was rather nasty. But my hair grew—and has continued to grow. Since then I have never had any trouble with my hair. At the age of 66 I now possess an abundant growth and visit the barber each month to have it cut. Once, after an accident, when I was compelled to remain in the hospital for several weeks, it grew so long that it was like a woman's flourishing hair growth.

The recipe I obtained from the old Indian savant and it has been used by many others. I have had the formula modernized by a practical chemist so that the cosmetic ointment now has a more pleasant odor and is more agreeable to apply to the scalp and base of the hair.

It contains no alcohol nor any of those ingredients which tend to dry the hair, scalp and roots. On the contrary, it is a fertilizing compound. The Indian principle is that it must contain elements from the three natural Kingdoms. This rule is maintained in the recipe.

I want you to try this cosmetic on your scalp. It can be applied when retiring each night, only a few moments being required. If is likely you will find a very satisfactory result, almost from the outset.

Now make no mistake; this is not a lovely scented preparation. There's nothing fancy about it. The name is Kotalko and you shall have the recipe free of cost by writing for it. Your druggist can supply the cosmetic according to the recipe; or you may obtain the compound from me, ready to use. **Send me your name and address.** The recipe will come free. If you would like a proof-box of the cosmetic, enclose 25 cents, silver or stamps. My address is: John Hart Brittain, 150 East Thirty-second St., BD-101, New York, N. Y.

September Morn Ring—Free

The beautiful raised figure of the young girl is a wonderful reproduction in metal of the original painting. The background is hard enameled in two colors to represent sea and sky. Ring is made of "Everbright Silver" warranted five years. We send it, your correct size, for only 12c to help pay advertising. THE AUCTION CO., Dept. C Attleboro, Mass.

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Would You Like to Quit Tobacco Quickly and Easily and Enjoy Yourself a Thousand Times Better While In Robust Health?

STOP RUINING YOUR LIFE

Why continue to commit slow suicide when you can live a really contented life if you only get your body and nerves right? It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid oneself of tobacco by suddenly stopping with "will-power"—don't do it. The correct way is to eliminate nicotine poison from the system, and genuinely overcome the craving.

Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, sleeplessness, gas belching, gnawing, or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach, constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor, red spots on skin, throat irritation, catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, heart failure, melancholy, lung trouble, impure (poisoned) blood, heartburn, torpid liver loss of appetite, bad teeth, foul breath, lassitude, lack of ambition, weakening and falling out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco, or snuff.

Here is an opportunity to receive **FREE** a carefully compiled **treatise on the subject,** containing interesting and valuable information that you should be glad to learn about. This book tells all about the **renowned THREE DAYS' METHOD** by which **thousands and thousands saved themselves** from the life-wrecking tobacco habit. Full particulars, including the book on tobacco and snuff habit, will be mailed **FREE TO YOU,** in plain wrapper, postpaid. All you need do is **merely REQUEST IT.** A postcard will do. Address

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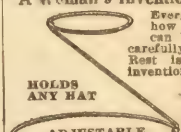

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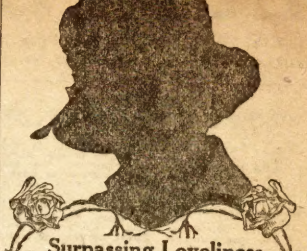

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